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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TRANSLATION POETICS:
COMPOSING THE BODY CANADIAN

BY

PAMELA BANTING

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled TRANSLATION POETICS: COMPOSING THE BODY CANADIAN

submitted by Pamela Banting

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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S. Neuman for L. Hutcheon. (external; report submitted)

Date: August 29, 1990

What this institution [the university] cannot bear, is for anyone to tamper with [*toucher à;* also "touch," "change," "concern himself with"] language, meaning *both* the *national* language *and*, paradoxically, an ideal of translatability that neutralizes this national language. Nationalism and universalism. What this institution cannot bear is a transformation that leaves intact neither of these two complementary poles (Jacques Derrida, "Living On / Border Lines" 94).

Yet I snatch this language that is foreign to me and turn it about in my fashion. I thread together truths that will be reproduced. . . . I am a foreigner to myself in my own language and I translate myself by quoting all the others (Madeleine Gagnon, "Body I" 180).

Christ, these hieroglyphs (Charles Olson, "Mayan Letters" 94).

Te amo, beso en tu boca la alegría
(Pablo Neruda, *Cien sonetos de amor* 164).

ABSTRACT

Contemporary Canadian poets Fred Wah, Robert Kroetsch and Daphne Marlatt write out of a 'translation poetics.' Various forms of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic forms of translation are at work in the composition of their long poems. Through close readings of selected long poems by each of Wah, Kroetsch and Marlatt a theory of translation poetics is developed.

Intralingual translation between the spoken and the written registers of a single language, English, is the primary focus of this study. Part I addresses several theoretical and linguistic arguments as to whether the relation between speech and writing can be considered as translation.

Focussing on Fred Wah's syntax, Part II illustrates how translation poetics can create an estranged parataxis as a function of 'ethnic' and poetic inheritance. It also examines how translation poetics explores the picto-ideo-phonographic reservoirs of language. Part III consists of four chapters dealing with, respectively, the discussions of three other critics (Robert Lecker, Frank Davey and Dennis Cooley) on the relation between speech and writing in Kroetsch's poetry, "Stone Hammer Poem" as the preface to the translation poetics of Kroetsch's long poem _Field Notes_, the translation of the letters of the alphabet as a generative device in _The Sad Phoenician_, and the rhetorical adventures of the figure of 'Don Juan' in _The Sad Phoenician_.

Part IV deals with Daphne Marlatt's feminist translation poetics. The first chapter analyzes ways in which Marlatt's work has been misread as essentialist and suggests, alternatively, that she and other experimental feminist writers do not write in a specifically feminine mother tongue but rather write in an 'interlanguage,' a language which is no one's mother tongue and therefore can only be read in two or more languages at once. Close readings of two of Marlatt's long poems, _How Hug a Stone_ and _Touch to My Tongue_, illustrate and develop this concept of writing in an interlanguage and theorize that such writing 'reorganizes' the body constructed by phallogocentric discourses.

The final chapter concludes that the contemporary Canadian long poem translates among different types of signifying practices in a process which claims authentic language for Canadian postcolonial culture and renews language itself.

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I. Preface: Translation as "nv s ble tr ck"

nv s ble

tr ck

(Fred Wah, *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* 25).

> To my last Birth, which I held masculine (as are all mens conceipts that are their owne though but by their collecting; and this was to *Montaigne* like *Baechus*, closed in, or loosed from his great Jupiters thigh) I the indulgent father invited two right Honorable Godfathers, with the One of your Noble Ladyshippes to witnesse. So to this defective edition (since all translations are reputed femalls), delivered at second hand; and I in this to serve but as *Vulcan*, to hatchet this *Minerva* from that *Jupiters* bigge braine (John Florio, in his dedication of his own translation of Montaigne's essays to the Countess of Bedford and her mother, quoted in Mary Ellen Lamb, "The Cooke Sisters: Attitudes toward Learned Women in the Renaissance," 115-16).

> When I speak of this writing of the other which will be more beautiful, I clearly understand translation as involving the same risk and chance as the poem. How to translate
> "poem"? a "poem"? . . . . (Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend" 5).

Translation theory has until very recently been staged almost exclusively in the individual translator's preface. Often a practical account of the translator's difficulties and the provisional solutions adopted to overcome or circumvent them, the translator's preface is also the locus of the translator's theorizing about language, the relations between or among different languages, and the relations between source and target texts, author and translator. Flora Ross Amos, whose book _Early Theories of Translation_ surveys the field of interlingual translation theory from the medieval period to Alexander Pope, states that "Generally speaking, it has been the prefaces to translations that have yielded material" of a theoretical nature (x). Despite its tricky and partially invisible title, the preface you are presently reading is intended to reveal the poetry, poetics and translation theories which have drawn me to analyze the relation between spoken and written models of poetic composition, to name this relation as translation, and to posit a 'translation poetics.' This preface does not, or does not only, "announce in the future tense ('this is what you are going to read') the conceptual content or significance . . . of what will _already_ have been _written_" (Derrida, _Dissemination_ 7). Rather it is itself a kind of translator's preface insofar as it theorizes translation.

Fred Wah's _Pictograms from the Interior of B.C._, from which the title of my preface borrows, has become something of a tutor text to my critical practice. The visual charms of the transcribed pictographs and their relation to Wah's own poetic 'transcreations' entice me to write myself further into their environs. Their allure does not persuade me to translate the " nv s ble tr ck" they perform in terms of meanings transferred between the two systems of pictograph and pictogram. Instead, miming Wah's 'transcreations' between different signifying systems, I wish to read and write a theory of the translative act as a medium for contemporary Canadian poetry.[1]

Both George Bowering and Smaro Kamboureli, the only two other critics besides myself to have published major essays on Wah, note and examine the movement in his work between spoken and written models of composition.[2] Bowering, drawing an analogy between Wah's writing and jazz improvisation, comments that "It would be as if speech & writing were to become one." "It is no surprise that when it comes to the composition of poetry, Fred Wah wants to conflate the spoken & the written, out" ("The Poems of Fred Wah" 16). Bowering insists that Wah's pictograms are "'transcreations.' That is, they are neither translations nor descriptions. They might resemble Williams' pictures *from* Brueghel" (15). Bowering conceives of speech and writing as radically different and self-contained practices. He writes:

> There is nothing more exterior than writing. The moment it is done it is forever outside. There is also nothing more interior than speech, than the body's saying. It has no meaning save when it

> accompanies movements inside the mouth & the ear. Speech & writing are therefore eternally separate. Yet the poet survives upon the ambition to entwine them (12).

Paradoxically, Bowering's formulation of the difference and nonrelation between the "bodies" of speech and writing and how the poet "survives" on the desire to entwine these two bodies could be recast in terms of translation poetics, as we shall see.

Both Bowering and Kamboureli concur with Wah's statement that his use of language is nonreferential (Nichol, "Transcreation" 45). Kamboureli, in her article "Fred Wah: A Poetry of Dialogue," reads "the central aspect of Wah's work [as] the textuality of the world in which human consciousness and the ontology of things are interwoven" (46). She argues that "He is situated on the interface of signifier and signified, relating to objects by contiguity" (47). Locating Wah's position as poet with regard to word and thing as a "dialogue" between reading and writing, Kamboureli concludes:

> Wah's non-referential language, with its implicit resistance to interpretation, prevents him from being a mere beholder of the spectacle of the world. As a reader Wah discovers the narrative inherent in the alphabet of things. As a poet he inscribes himself on the textuality of the world. He is arrested

within the dialogue he initiates (59).

Kamboureli constructs a series of parallels between which "dialogue" is enacted: word and thing, signifier and signified, writing and reading. Like Bowering, who sees writing and speech as "eternally separate" but for the poet's attempts to entwine them, Kamboureli imagines the "double discourse" (59) of graph and phoneme displacing the poet bodily from a position of humanist mastery over the objective world and immersing him in "the alphabet of things" (46). Bowering's article hinges on images of the poet engaged in various physical activities--skiing down a mountain, improvising on jazz trumpet, sliding down a scree slope, planting (himself in) a garden, breathing again after suffering the death of his father.. Kamboureli's article in effect not only demonstrates the repositioning of the poet as a subject-in-process in his own language, but it simultaneously traces the necessary realignment and reorientation of the poet's body as he "replaces interpretation with perception" (47), "detour[s] from representation" and "shuns mimetic writing and interpretation" (55). Wah's texts perform, in Kamboureli's words,[3] a "marriage between the eye and the ear" (49). This marriage supplants the traditional one between hearing and understanding, the ear and cognition (or self-re-cognition), in poetry which does not challenge representation and mimesis. Seeing, for Wah, is not the gaze of the humanist ego. Seeing is "the first gesture of the movement toward inscription, the graphic exposure of signs that tells the story of the identity of things and of the poet" (47), such that he is enabled to contextualize himself as an object among other objects.[4] "[T]he eye and the ear work together" at the interface between speech and writing and collaborate with the tongue to give to the audible voice the shape of a letter (49).

Although Kamboureli does not specifically mark her use of the term 'dialogue' or 'dialogic,' its proximity to and interpenetration with that of 'intertextuali[illegible]' suggests that it is of Kristevan as well as of more common, general usage. She attributes her use of 'intertextuality' (52) to Julia Kristeva's sense of the term, defined as "the transposition of one or more _systems_ of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position" (_Desire in Language_ 15). It is important to note that both Kristeva's definition of 'intertextuality' and Kamboureli's own explication of what she calls "Wah's dialogic method" (55) are very close to translation. Intertextuality, dialogism and translation all foreground the writer's double enunciative position as writer _and_ reader. As Kamboureli notes, "[Wah] starts as a reader soon to become a writer. . . . Wah's reading becomes a graphic event" (52). The alternation between what are normally thought of as two distinctly separate subject positions, writer and reader, allows Kristeva and Kamboureli to treat composition as process (as 'becoming,' to use Kamboureli's terminology).

Kristeva's use of 'transposition' not only includes the sense of transformation of language and text but allows her simultaneously to theorize the subject-in-process/on trial [le sujet en procès] within signification. Transformation as 'transposition' affects, and effects, both the text and the writing subject. The poet is both writer and reader, text and intertext, textual body and embodied text. As Kristeva explains, her term 'transposition,' or 'intertextuality,' supplements Freud's terms 'displacement' and 'condensation' (the two fundamental processes in the work of the unconscious), which entered the field of linguistics through the concepts of metaphor and metonymy:

> To these we must add a third "process"--the passage from one sign system to another. To be sure, this process comes about through a combination of displacement and condensation, but this does not account for its total operation. It also involves an altering of the thetic position--the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one. The new signifying system may be produced with the same signifying material; in language, for example, the

> passage may be made from narrative to text. Or it may be borrowed from different signifying materials: the transposition from a carnival scene to the written text, for instance. In this connection we examined the formation of a specific signifying system--the novel--as the result of a redistribution of several different sign systems: carnival, courtly poetry, scholastic discourse. The term _intertextuality_ denotes this transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another; but since this term has often been understood in the banal sense of "study of sources," we prefer the term _transposition_ because it specifies that the passage from one signifying system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic--of enunciative and denotative positionality (_Revolution in Poetic Language_ 59-60).

Kristeva prefers the term 'transposition' because of her investment in exploring 'positionality' as the realm of propositions and judgment. She also exploits the term in order to distinguish this process from 'representability.' 'Representability' she defines as the specific articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic for a given sign system. Transposition, on the other hand, implies "the abandonment of a former sign system, the passage to a second via an instinctual intermediary common to the two systems, and the articulation of the new system with its new representability" (60). As a neologism, 'transposition' is perhaps less susceptible than the more common term of 'translation' to generalized and metaphorical usage and to slippage into metaphysical or transcendental presuppositions. It is also more flexible: 'transposition' names a translative process that moves not only between, but within, languages and texts and between different realms of signification, such as carnival, only beginning to be conceived as textual.[5]

My own preference for the term 'translation' derives from several impulses. First, it is to open that still fairly traditional term to the effects of transposition and thereby to expand its range. Second, it is an acknowledgment of Wah's adoption and qualifications of the term 'transcreation' and of Robert Kroetsch's and Daphne Marlatt's essays on the relationship of translation to poetic composition. Third, it is a reflection of my emphasis upon the process of composition. When a poet sits down in front of a blank piece of paper or a computer screen, s/he does not sit down to transposition the subject _per_ _se_. Often, however, s/he does begin to translate. Fourth, I wish to preserve the link with the history of translation theory and with current developments in that field. Finally, and most importantly, although my interest in the positionality of the subject overlaps with that of Kristeva and Kamboureli, I am not only engaged with the relation between the subject and his or her signs but also with the relation between the two economies of speech and writing. While the term 'translation' retains the double agent of reader and writer, it shifts the focus somewhat away from positionality and toward the processes by which positionality is inscribed. Translation between speech and writing in the process of composition undermines the normative positionality of the phallogocentric body, which is constructed upon the irreducible separation and hierarchization of speech and writing, and composes the body differently.

Following Wah's own insistence that the poems are not translations but transcreations, Bowering and Kamboureli eschew translation as a model for his poetic composition. However, in theorizing the relations between reading and writing, and speech and writing, they are in fact discussing what I call 'translation poetics,' namely, the relation within certain poetic texts between speech and writing. In this sense Wah's pictogram " nv s ble/ tr ck" is more than the magic "that is performed when i is removed, or when the eyes are covered (Bowering 19). The " nv s ble/ tr ck" is an instance of intralingual and intersemiotic translation. In Wah's interpretation, the pictograph shows the appearance and disappearance of a human figure. When the 'i's' are removed, as Wah says, "the letters, the phonology, breaks up nearly in the same way the pictograph itself breaks up which was very satisfying imagewise" (Nichol, "Transcreation" 37). If we read this particular pair of pictograph and pictogram emblematically, we can intimate that in its effects translation is not unlike a palimpsest, or a magic slate in which the marks etched into the wax surface of the underlayer remain when the mark on the plastic film disappears.

J.C. Catford, in his book A Linguistic Theory of Translation, argues that between speech and writing there can be no translation. In the first place, he notes that there is no systematic theory of what he refers to as "graphic substance." He finds two instances only of graphological translation: an approximation to graphological translation is practised, according to him, by typographers who wish to give an 'exotic' flavour to written texts; and persons writing in a foreign language may sometimes produce graphological translations. He emphasizes repeatedly that although in translation there is the substitution of grammar and lexis, and phonic and graphic "substances" (his word) as well, nevertheless the TL graphological form is by no means a translation equivalent of the SL graphological form (20).[6] Catford brackets out the replacement of SL phonology and graphology by TL phonology and graphology from 'total translation' by stating that these replacements do not form equivalents and by arguing that therefore translation does not take place. These replacements are merely consequential upon the replacements of grammar and lexis (22).

Secondly, he refers to the process of switching between the spoken and the written media of language as "transcoding" and states emphatically that this is not translation (42). For any particular language, there is an arbitrary relationship between phonological and graphological units. Conversion from spoken to written medium, or vice versa, is a universal practice among literates, he says, but it is not translation because it is not replacement by items which are equivalent due to their relationship to the same substance.

All of Catford's categories are subject to his a priori linguistic dictum that language is form, not substance. His linguistic theory of translation is admittedly formalist; he deliberately sets aside the materiality of the sign. What he isolates and names as phonic substance, graphic substance and even situation substance are excluded as extralinguistic from his formalist theory which aims to preserve grammar and lexis, that is, meaning, from contamination by the ~~various~~ substances he precipitates out. Moreover, his theory of translation is thoroughly imbued with the metaphysics of presence, which prizes the auto-affective elements of the speech act. Although relations between languages can generally be regarded as at least bidirectional (though not always symmetrical), translation for Catford is always only unidirectional--from ST to TT. It is this bidirectionality and these banned substances which I wish to incorporate into my theorization of translation in order to analyze the role of the body in the translation between speech and writing.

Several more recent works of translation theory, by both linguists and those who are not primarily linguists, challenge work such as Catford's. W. Haas, like Catford a British linguist, writing in 1970, just five years after the publication of Catford's textbook, posits the view exactly opposite to Catford's on the nature of the relation between writing and speech. In his book Phono-Graphic Translation Haas argues that "The relation itself between writing and speech is different in kind from the reference of either to things outside language" (15). Asserting that of course his model of these relations does not work within the traditional view of translation as "the transfer of some neutral extralingual meaning from one linguistic expression to another" (17), he injects the body back into his theory of translation. If such neutral, extralinguistic meaning is what is believed to be transferred between languages and texts during translation, then clearly, he says, it is not possible to call what takes place when meaningless phonemes are matched with meaningless graphemes 'translation.' He criticizes this conception of meaning as "something independent of any language whatever. But since we have never met meanings outside language, we could not say what it might be like to transfer them, a host of migrant souls, from one linguistic embodiment to another" (18). Noting a difference, then, between referentiality and phono-graphic correspondence (both writing and speech refer to 'things') Haas posits the relation between writing and speech as translation. He writes:

> . . . the operation which we perform upon the correspondence between writing and speech is translation--proceeding in one direction when we write down what is spoken, and in the other when we read aloud what is written. . . . As we can understand what is said in one language without translating it into another, so we understand what is spoken without writing it down, and also what is written without reading it aloud (16).

Unlike theories such as Catford's, which aims to preserve referentiality and meaning at the expense of the materiality of language and its "situation substance," Haas's theory is built upon the lived situations in which the body reads, speaks and writes. While he concedes that there are many differences between phono-graphic translation and interlingual translation, still he does not see these differences as sufficient reason for ruling that translation does not function between speech and writing (18-19). Some of the confusion surrounding the relation between speech and writing, he suggests, stems from the fact that we often mistake the names of letters for nouns. Letters are physical objects, which themselves have no meaning. The same is true of the names of phonemes. Furthermore, he says, we tend to use the same inventory of names for both phonemes and graphemes (23-24), thus habitually blurring the two different media together into one. However, the relation between speech and writing is translative also in that information given in either system is not always translatable into the other (84).[7]

Roman Jakobson's distinction among three types of translation is useful in clarifying Haas's sense of translation between different media and also in locating the limits of translation theories which privilege interlingual translation as translation "proper." In his essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" Jakobson first points out that "the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign." Language is metonymic in its associations. Meaning as such is another name for the deferral of one sign from another. He then labels the three kinds of translation as follows:

> 1) Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
>
> 2) Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
>
> 3) Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems (261).

Jakobson's examples of intersemiotic translation include the transposition from verbal art into music, dance, cinema, or painting, but he does not elaborate upon intersemiotic translation. However, it is clear that, despite the apparent similarity of the names--Haas's phono-graphic and Jakobson's intersemiotic translation--the two cannot be conflated under Jakobson's typological definition, because translation between speech and writing is not the interpretation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal signs (though it may be safely considered transmutation). If, as Haas reminds us, letters are physical objects as well as linguistic signs, then the relation between letters as physical objects and letters as signs can be categorized as intersemiotic translation.

The same might be said of the physical sounds of phonemes. Under Jakobson's tripartite model, phono-graphic translation might be considered as a form of intralingual translation, though it is not a rewording as such either. In fact, Jakobson's categories as he defines them are of little utility in the present project, since translation between speech and writing can take place intralingually, interlingually and, if intersemiotic translation were considered more loosely as the interpretation of one set of signs by a different (though not necessarily nonverbal) set of signs, intersemiotically as well.[8]

Walter J. Ong in his work on the historical transition from orality to literacy deals with the transformation of consciousness and, in a move parallel to Catford's marking off of what he calls the situation substance, almost entirely brackets the body. While Ong traces a process of radical change at the conscious level, he steadfastly maintains a speech-based, Cartesian, dualist model of the subject. Thus, in failing to address the body in terms other than the Cartesian split between mind and body, Ong is able to describe the "psychodynamics of orality," for instance, but is unable to account for the relation between speech and writing, and indeed he does not attempt such an account. Moreover, his model is a 'progressive' (though nostalgic) one: for him, the order of human history is such that orality precedes literacy, which precedes secondary orality.[9] In the interests of making these various historical stages clear and distinct, Ong does not dwell on the relations between oral signifying systems and written ones. By arguing for the historicity of these stages, Ong implies that the human individual possesses the power of conscious choice as to the fate of "the original spoken word" (81) and its chirographic, print and electronic disseminations. Despite his excoriations of critics whom he insists upon labelling "textualists" (A.J. Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, Philippe Sollers, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan) (165) for failing to take into consideration "primary orality," Ong himself cannot explore the operations of speech and writing within a single text or human subject because such an exploration would be tantamount to a virtual deconstruction of that text or subject, with the corollary result that the subject would turn out to be a subject of signs and signification and not a 'man' at all, if by that term we understand the construction of the specifically Cartesian, humanist self.[10]

Jacques Derrida, whose work deconstructs the Cartesian subject, has written copiously on speech and writing and on translation, and I have relied on his work throughout the chapters which follow this one far more than on any other critic or theorist of translation, except of course for the three poets, Wah, Kroetsch and Marlatt. His work is extraordinarily complex, and any short synopsis of its role in my theorizing of the relation between speech and writing as translation will be reductive. Nevertheless, some general remarks on the importance of translation in his work are in order.

In his "Letter to a Japanese Friend," Derrida writes: "(and the question of deconstruction is also through and through _the_ question of translation, and of the language of concepts, of the conceptual corpus of so-called 'western' metaphysics)" (1). Derrida's working through of _différance_, the trace structure, the supplement, the _pharmakon_, and other philosophical semes is the working through of the structure of signification in alphabetic writing from within mainly the French, German and English languages. In a note appended to a reprint of this letter Derrida quotes from a French dictionary of 1873 in which, along with the mechanical, the grammatical or linguistic senses of the word 'deconstruction' are collected. It is worth quoting this passage in full:

> "'Grammar: displacement that words are made to undergo when a written sentence is composed in a foreign language, by violating, it is true, the syntax of that language, but also by drawing close to the syntax of the maternal language, in order better to grasp the sense that the words present in the

> sentence. This term exactly designates what the majority of grammarians improperly call "Construction"; for in any author, all the sentences are constructed according to the genius of his national language; what does a foreigner do who tries to comprehend, to translate this author? He deconstructs the sentences, disassembles their words, according to the genius of the foreign language; or if one wants to avoid all confusion in terms, there is Deconstruction with respect to the language of the translated author, and Construction with respect to the language of the translator. . ." (quoted in Leavey 193).

The denotation of 'deconstruction' is precisely the linguistic deformation described by contemporary translation theorists as the construction of an 'interlanguage.' The term 'interlanguage,' coined by Larry Selinker in 1972 and further developed by Gideon Toury, refers to the linguistic interference from the mother tongue (SL) which results from a second-language learner's attempted production of the target language (TL). An interlanguage "enjoys an intermediate status between SL and TL" (Toury 71). Deconstruction, then, is the construction of an interlanguage either or both between languages and texts and within a single language and text.[11] To deconstruct is, in part, to translate.[12]

As Barbara Johnson points out, "For Derrida's work, in fact, has always already been (about) translation. His first book was a translation of Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry.' Derrida's theory and practice of *écriture*, indeed, occupy the very point at which philosophy and translation meet" ("Taking Fidelity Philosophically" 144). As the English language translator of Derrida's *Dissemination*, Johnson has first-hand knowledge of the difficulty which Derrida's own texts foreground, namely, as Johnson says, "the more a text is worked through by the problem of translation, the more untranslatable it becomes" (146). In the following passage she sums up how this problematic of translation manifests itself in Derrida's texts:

> Derrida's entire philosophic enterprise, indeed, can be seen as an analysis of the translation process at work in every text. In studying the *différance* of signification, Derrida follows the misfires, losses, and infelicities that prevent any given language from being *one*. Language, in fact, can only exist in the space of its own foreignness to itself. . . . Not only, however, is this self-différance the *object* of Derrida's attention: it is an integral part of the functioning of his own écriture. The challenges to translation presented by Derrida's writing have continually multiplied over the years. From the

> early, well-bred neologisms to a syntax that increasingly frustrates the desire for unified meaning, Derrida has even, in Living On--first published in English--gone so far as to write to the translator about the difficulties he is in the act of creating for him, thus figuratively sticking out his tongue--his mother tongue--at the borderline between the translated text and the original (146-47).

Language works by deferral and différance. The trace structure dictates that any given language functions only through différance from itself. Meaning is not irremediably glued to signifiers but only emerges in the interstices between different signifiers. What we call thought takes place between the mark and its erasure (" nv s ble/ tr ck"). Thus any text is always already an impossible translation that renders translation impossible (Johnson 146). The project of Western philosophy has been to repress the foreignness of language to itself, along with translation, in the name of establishing philosophy as the transparent expression of thought. Derrida attributes the difficulty of translation with regard to philosophy as situated "less in the passage from one language to another, from one philosophical language to another, than already, as we shall see, in the tradition between Greek and Greek; a violent difficulty in the transference of a nonphilosopheme into a philosopheme.

With this problem of translation we will thus be dealing with nothing less than the problem of the very passage into philosophy" (Dissemination 72).

It must be mentioned, however, that in the earlier Of Grammatology Derrida uses the words 'translator' and 'translation' in a metaphorical rather than literal sense, if such a distinction can be made. Speaking about the logocentric view of language and its confinement of writing to a secondary and instrumental function, he indicates that this view determines writing as "translator of a full speech that was fully present (present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general), technics in the service of language, spokesman, interpreter of an originary speech itself shielded from interpretation" (8).[13] In a subsequent passage dealing with the Aristotelian perspective on signification, Derrida uses 'translation' as a synonym for the apparently natural signification which obtains in Aristotle between the voice and the mind, mental experiences and things, in order himself to distinguish between such natural resemblances and the unnatural or conventional symbolization between voice and writing (11).

Derrida's use of the words 'translator' and 'translation' in these contexts, particularly in light of his later articles and discussions devoted to the problematizing of translation, functions less to question the nature of the relation between speech and writing than to question the supposed natural resemblances among mind, speech and writing and the kind of translation sponsored by this order of things.[14] The support of translation theory traditionally has been Aristotle's concept that although people use different writing systems and spoken languages nonetheless mental experiences are universal and therefore susceptible to translation. In using the words 'translator' and 'translation' to describe the logocentric view of the relation between writing and speech Derrida does not forfeit these words to the episteme he is deconstructing. (Moreover, he might argue, deconstruction neither prohibits nor licenses such forfeiture). On the contrary, his critique is of the relegation of writing to subordinate status with regard to speech, the privileging of representation, and the assumption that the being of the entity is unmediated presence.

It is significant that, in the above-quoted passage in which Derrida portrays the logocentric perspective on writing, he invokes the words 'translator,' 'spokesman' and 'interpreter' (in its double meaning of translator and hermeneutic specialist). He thus metaphorizes, by personifying and thereby miming, the logocentric view of being as presence. He 'humanizes' the logocentric theory of writing by personifying that writing as translator, spokesman and interpreter. In other words, the metaphorical, logocentric version of 'translation' is shown to contain within it its own deconstruction.

My adoption of 'translation' to refer to the relation between speech and writing in the texts of Wah, Kroetsch and Marlatt is neither logocentric nor always strictly or solely Derridean either. For instance, Derrida confronts the problem of the passage from ordinary language into philosophy, but there are a number of other questions to ask in terms of translation poetics. What are the problems with regard to the difficulty of translation of the passage from standard language into poetic language? How is the problem of translation worked through in poetry and poetics? How does literature pass from one canon to another, from one national literature to another, from one poet or poetic line to another? Where are the borders between poetics and literary theory, and philosophy, located? Does writing transgress these borders? Do the difficulties associated with translation become generative when confronted by a poet? If the question of deconstruction is also the question of translation, then is translation poetics deconstructive? These and other questions inform the pages which follow.

Furthermore, although he deconstructs binary models of the subject, it has been argued that Derrida's deconstruction of the Cartesian subject has been "generalized to cover all subjects, even those who were never included in that core group of Subjects" (Kintz 115-16). Therefore even Derrida's deconstruction, "a deconstruction of male, white, bourgeois subjectivity, the 'I' generalized to the universality of the 'we,' with the concomitant extension of the applicability of deconstruction to all, indifferently, undifferentiatedly" (116), because it fails to factor in the effects of gender differentiation, which is "'translated by and translates a difference in the relation to power, language, and meaning'" [sic] (Kristeva, quoted by Kintz 132), cannot be relied upon entirely for an account of how the act of translation between writing and speech reorganizes the Cartesian subject and its body.

An additional site at which to theorize the ways in which an oral body relates to a textual body is experimental feminist writing. The experimental writing practices of écriture féminine (in France and Québec) and writing the (m)other tongue (in the United States and Canada) are not occupied, as many critics have clamoured, with writing down an exclusively feminine language dredged up from either an originally feminine psyche or raised feminist consciousness, or from lost and found matriarchal texts and mythologies. Rather they are engaged in the inscription of an 'interlanguage.' As Jane Gallop suggests, the (m)other tongue is a composite that is no one's mother tongue and can only be comprehended in two languages at once (328). Such writing practices can be described as deconstructive, translative acts excavating and exploring the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonogrammic elements of language and incorporating the body's resources of gesture, performance and hysterical practice as well.

Much feminist criticism has analyzed how women writers incorporate certain female body metaphors, especially maternal ones, into the structure of their texts. However, if, as Hélène Cixous suggests in "The Laugh of the Medusa," neither the female body nor the text can be designated the source, cause or original of the other, then what transpires in this process of intersemiotic translation between anatomy and text? As Marlatt states, the tongue is "the major organ which touches all the different parts of the mouth to make the different sounds--tongue as speech organ. Also, the tongue is a major organ in making love between women [and others]. It's an erotic organ [intertwining] eroticism and speech--lovemaking as a form of organ speech, and poetry as a form of verbal speech" (Williamson, "Speaking In" 28). The body can be theorized not as a sum of its internal organs and other visceral parts but as a series of contiguous libidinal surfaces. The task is to try to think the body not as represented, not as "the very expression, moment by moment, of an inward spirit, or a person belonging to himself [sic]" (Lingis 25), but the body as its own signifier. "[T]he verbalization, the becoming-conscious, is not the operation that makes the forces that have been marked into signs; the inscribed flesh has been significant long before the voice" (39). Try to think the body not as outside of or as pre-existing either alphabetic writing or the voice but as perpetually translating, distributing inscriptions, sounds, vocalizations, touches, excitations, flows, emissions, pressures, pulses, weights, liquids, thoughts, surges, pangs, glances, gestures, movements . . . .

The body as a mobile and lifesize pictogram.

nv s ble tr ck.

To hypothesize the body as pictogram is not to perform a recursive double return--to a 'primitive' form of writing and to the mute flesh. It is not to substitute the body as sensuous original (pictogram) for the body as phonic original (phonogram). The body as pictogram, as the syntax of the phrase suggests, is a metaphor. Instead of rendering the body subservient to the demands of phonogrammic writing (speech as the translation into language of being; writing as the translation of speech; the body as the imaginary hollow in which these translations of the symbolic can take place), my metaphor, which is not only a metaphor but a picto-ideo-phonogrammic figure (pictogrammic by virtue of the supplement of Wah's " nv s ble/ tr ck"), reverses the logocentric hierarchy of speech over writing and attempts to inscribe the alterity of the scene of reading and writing into our construction of the body. The body as pictogram is not the body "proper." It cannot be appropriated by 'being' nor by an imaginary interior volume erected by the metaphysics and mathematics of the phoneme properly recorded.

Theorizing translation is another way of deconstructing the binary between inner and outer. If neither body nor text is construed as the original of the other, then multiple translations--intersemiotic, intralingual and interlingual--can take place. In this situation, to translate, and to theorize translation, is also to luxuriate in the pleasures of the signifier. To translate is not always only to write or to speak. Translation also composes the body. In its play with the visible and the invisible, the signifier and the signified, writing and speech, translation translates the sign into a bodysculpting tool.

II. Fred Wah's Syntax: A Genealogy, A Translation*

> . . . Chinese grammar is fluid, not architectural. Whereas in a highly inflected language such as Latin, words are solid bricks with which to build complicated edifices of periods and paragraphs, in Chinese they are chemical elements which form new compounds with great ease. A Chinese word cannot be pinned down to a 'part of speech', 'gender', 'case', etc., but is a mobile unit which acts on, and reacts with, other units in a constant flux (James J.Y. Liu, The Art of Chinese Poetry 46).

> The secret proper name, the absolute idiom, is not necessarily on the order of language in the phonic sense but may be on the order of a gesture, a physical association, a scene of some sort, a taste, a smell (Jacques Derrida, The Ear of the Other 106).

Charles Olson's attack on what he called "sprawl" in poetry, namely, the humanist insertion of the ego as barrier between the world and the poem, called for a cutting off of the dead ear of the rhetorical tradition. The poet's job, he insisted, was to pay attention to "the swift currents of the syllable" ("Projective Verse" 151), to listen for those properties of language which had lately been overlooked or suppressed in poetry, and not merely to record lips having spoken but rather to listen for the ear of the Other:

> We have lived long in a generalizing time, at least since 450 B.C. And it has had its effects on the best of men, on the best of things. Logos, or discourse, for example, has, in that time, so worked its abstractions into our concept and use of language that language's other function, speech, seems so in need of restoration that several of us got back to

> hieroglyphs or to ideograms to right the balance ("Human Universe" 162).

Olson urged the poet to transgress the boundaries of "inherited line, stanza, over-all form" ("Projective Verse" 148), to travel the periplus of "the workings of his own throat" (158) and to descend into the labyrinth of the ear carried on the bubble of the syllable. For him, the rediscovery of the materiality of "that fine creature" the syllable (150), in part through the encounter with alternate systems of notation (Mayan glyphs, Chinese ideograms), challenged the space-time co-ordinates and syntax of traditional verse-making:

> Which brings us up, immediately, bang, against tenses, in fact against syntax, in fact against grammar generally, that is, as we have inherited it. . . . I would argue that . . . the conventions which logic has forced on syntax must be broken open as quietly as must the too set feet of the old line. But an analysis of how far a new poet can stretch the very conventions on which communication by language rests, is too big for these notes, which are meant, I hope it is obvious, merely to get things started ("Projective Verse" 152-53).

At the time he was composing his literary manifestoes, Olson was aware that any radical challenge to syntax would also constitute a threat to the accepted model of communication and furthermore that it would be impossible to foresee just how far any future poet might be able to push this model. He was also aware that by upsetting the master-slave relationship between logos and syntax he was initiating a long-term project of dynamic and profound potential.

Readers of Fred Wah's work may wonder whether Wah early appointed himself to the task of exploring, through projective verse, these imagined outer limits of communication. Wah's work is, and is generally regarded as, "syntactically daunting" (Ricou 371). Difficult grammars of writing and reading are produced when a poet writes, as he does, "partly the way someone would talk but also the way someone would think so the writing is like a record of the actual occurrence (and concurrence) of language and thinking where the syntax isn't formal and preset but natural."[1] No doubt it is partly due to the difficulty of this aspect of his work that it has not yet received as much critical attention as it deserves and demands. This is unfortunate because, while the content of Wah's work is intriguing and its 'themes' heartfelt and important, it is his notation which not only makes his work new and exciting but in some respects precedes the development of the content. Long before Breathin' My Name with a Sigh and the range of forms the father content generated in that book, Grasp the Sparrow's Tail and

Waiting for Saskatchewan, the father was very much a textual presence at the level of syntax.

Reviewers from Douglas Barbour to Fraser Sutherland have mentioned or alluded to Wah's syntactical practice. Barbour refers to "a kind of clipped and cryptic musicality" informing the lyrical quality of Wah's poetry, and he suggests that in Owners Manual this lyric cry is "subtly subverted toward koan," the word 'koan' exactly capturing both the manifest content of Owners Manual as "spiritual guide book" (Barbour 33) as well as the puzzling and paradoxical nature of its language, which, incidentally, is less pronounced in that book than in some of the others, both earlier and later. Sutherland, reviewing Waiting for Saskatchewan, describes Wah as a "resourceful if somewhat inaccessible poet" (Sutherland C7).

Other reviewers are undecided on the subject of Wah's syntax. N. M. Drutz observes (in an elliptical loop of a sentence) that "Through a loose but not undisciplined syntax, a free association technique of words and images, Wah recreates the cosmos as he sees it, through the medium of memory" but concludes that "the work is marred occasionally by his whimsical syntax," which, together with his images, "are sometimes too enigmatic and private" (Drutz 176-77). Bruce Serafin is also apparently divided on the subject of Wah's syntax, remarking first that the short section he has quoted from Breathin' My Name with a Sigh "contains almost nothing of the vivacity and directness of ordinary speech. It is not talk that it resembles, but rather the excruciatingly fastidious notes of a scientist," producing a cold poetry that makes no attempt to "touch" the reader. However, Serafin notes, "the tiniest shift in syntax registers with the force of a detonation." He concludes that the obscurity of Wah's book is "a necessary obscurity, an obscurity in the service of meaning" (Serafin L33).

It would be misleading, however, to give the impression that, with notable exceptions, most of the critics have been ambivalent about or confused by the strangeness of Wah's syntax. Especially those who have discussed his work at some length--George Bowering, Smaro Kamboureli, Steve McCaffery, bpNichol--have certainly grasped the significance of his compositional method. Bowering, for example, describes Wah's syntax variously as phenomenological, performative and deconstructive. Kamboureli argues that Wah positions (and problematizes) himself at/as the site of a dialogue between the enounced and the enunciation. Wah's purpose, she says, is to avoid "being a mere beholder of the spectacle of the world" and instead to become "the reader of his own drama" (Kamboureli 59).[2] McCaffery places the "grammatical assymetry" of Wah's writing within a project of picto-ideo-phonographic composition. As one in a series of Toronto Research Group (T.R.G.) Reports on translation and compositional processes, Nichol interviews both Wah and his wife, Pauline Butling, on the translative elements of Wah's 'transcreations' in _Pictograms from the Interior of B.C._

My article "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician" also deals with _Pictograms from the Interior of B.C._ In it I explore various compositional strategies within Wah's 'transcreative' method, including the notations of his phonetic and graphic dialogues with a non-phonetic system of notation, the construction in English of a synthetic middle voice, his sense of narrative as what takes place moment by moment in the act of writing itself, and his transcription of 'inner speech,' that discontinuous flow of writing, speech, graphic images, and proprioceptive stimuli and response which inform the body. The article concludes that "For Fred Wah, just as experience is its own expression [in inner speech], noesis and _poiesis_ are simultaneous. Theory, which derives from writing, and rhetoric, born in speech, are collapsed into one another" (18). While I would no longer conclude that theory and rhetoric, writing and speech, are "collapsed" into one another but rather, as the title of the article implies, participate in an intralingual translation of one another, nonetheless my analysis of Wah's transcreative compositional strategies remains valid.

In "The Undersigned: Ethnicity and Signature in Fred Wah's Poetry" I examine the ways in which Wah's use of his name to generate several of his poetic texts is the signature, not of personal identity as such, but rather of his ethnicity and the loss of language entailed in crossing between languages and cultures. The one who suffers this loss of language and self at the border between two languages is 'the undersigned,' the insufficiently signed. 'The undersigned' is also the one who signs after, the one who, even before his or her birth, enters into a shadow contract with the ancestors. The terms of this contract stipulate that the inheritor of the name will translate. Hence Wah's translation and dissemination of his patronym. In the present chapter I hope to extend all of these convergent lines of thinking about Wah's poetry by focussing on his syntax as a translation and a genealogy.

. . . . . .

From his first book, Lardeau, to his most recent, Waiting for Saskatchewan and Music at the Heart of Thinking,[3] Wah's writing has not conformed to the rules and conventions of standard English syntax and has followed rather

> . . . a procession forth
> into I like the movement
> in our syntax goes
> something like a river Daphne (Wah, Breathin' My Name
> with a Sigh).

His prose poems, for example, exhibit very loose syntactical connections:

> to get it how the river in its mud flows down stream
> how it goes mouth or breath fluid down to the toes
> outside in the wind the dark and stormy brother's
> sister's blood keep coming back into the word
> alongside itself a bear and a bad man/woman family
> blood keeps it now my daughters for the moon and men
> and their own river a cleft in the earth going colour
> languaging a feeling inside the surface feeling out
> the breadth of my mother/father things I am also left
> over thing put together calendar's event world the
> children's things and wind last night/biography
> (Breathin' My Name with a Sigh).

But in his lined, lyric poems too Wah departs from the syntactical expectations of English. Using a variety of techniques for "making strange the familiar,"[4] he tries to avoid the outworn habits of thought inevitably imposed by the structures of standard language. The beginning of "Mountain" provides a good example of several of these techniques:

Mountain that has come over me in my youth
green grey orange of colored dreams
darkest hours of no distance
Mountain full of creeks ravines of rock
and pasture meadow snow white ridges humps of granite
ice springs trails twigs stumps sticks leaves moss
shit of bear deer balls rabbit shit
shifts and cracks of glaciation mineral
O Mountain that has hung over me in these years of fiery desire
burns on your sides your many crotches rocked
and treed in silence from the winds
Mountain many voices nameless curves and pocked in shadows
not wild but smooth
your instant flats flat walls of rock
your troughs of shale and bits
soft summer glacier snow
the melting edge of rounded stone
and cutting of your height the clouds
a jagged blue
your nights your nights alone
your winds your winds your grass . . .

(*Loki is Buried at Smoky Creek* 23).

The voice is suspended at the level of the noun subject--naming and renaming, listing, calling, invoking--without verb or predication. As above, both in his prose poems and his lyrics, Wah often omits punctuation, articles and personal pronouns. He breaks lines at points which fracture syntax and seed meaning with ambiguity and lapses. He assembles sheer lists of nouns and repeats words and phrases in almost incantatory fashion. He separates subject and predicate, inverts or undetermines the order of adjective and noun, scatters the poem over the page, and makes abrupt transitions which leave a sentence or a thought uncompleted.

The cumulative effect of these devices is powerful enough that even in those poems where the syntax is more or less technically 'correct' one nevertheless has the illusion that the poem is asyntactical, or at least more so than it actually is, as in the following extract from "Poem for Turning." Here the extremely short lines and the absence of direct objects or their 'veiling' as verbs fracture the syntactic flow, producing the effect of both real and apparent parataxis:

> in
> heel
> knee
> cut side-hill
> ditch run-off
> move down
> ricochet track
> line shove
> spin out fall

back fall side
saw the forest
clear the creek rock
split the sky
open roll dig
cover burn
fill the fill
and cross the bridge
turn up
turn into turn
at it (Among 34).

In this poem of how to move down a mountain the instructional tone, elicited by the absence of pronouns and by the use of supposedly imperative verbs, is supported by the fast line changes, which force the reader to stay right with the text (as one generally must with instructional manuals) instead of either speeding faster or slowly plodding through it in order to grasp its significance. The inconstancy of the verb tense throughout the poem, amounting to a virtual indeterminacy of tense--fluctuating like an optical illusion between the present indicative and the imperative--helps to keep the reader situated at the interface between word and world. In the flux between tenses the voice splits, alternating between the (absent) first or third person singular or plural (I, s/he, we, or they) of the indicative and an unnamed Other (you) invisibly inscribed by the imperative.

Elsewhere I have suggested that one could describe the drift and fissures of Wah's syntax as a transcription of 'inner speech.'[5] It is sufficient to recall here two aspects of inner speech: first, that, operating as quanta or abbreviated particles of thought, inner speech obeys a paratactical, rather than syntactical, structure. Second, as a function in itself, and not simply the interior projection of external speech, inner speech incorporates somatic and proprioceptive components, speech, writing, and graphic images, without privileging any one mode over another. Inner speech is picto-ideo-phonographic.[6] If it is true, as Mikhail Bakhtin has argued, that a poet's style "'is engendered from the style of his inner speech, which does not lend itself to control, and his inner speech is itself the product of his entire social life'" (Emerson, quoting Bakhtin, 25), then Wah's style can be seen as a function of his intellectual, social and familial influences.

Wah credits his reading of Ernest Fenollosa for relieving him of the notion that a sentence must be a complete thought and thus for leading him away from syntactic composition in the direction of a paratactic style (Wah, "Making Strange Poetics" 214). Wah finds very limited poetic possibilities in either the sentence as such or in the already completed thought. For him the possibilities lie in a notation that allows him to record the semiotic irruptions and pulsions of the "heartography" within (Wah, "Subjective as Objective" 116).

An overview of the general significance of Ernest Fenollosa's and Ezra Pound's collaborative valorization of the Chinese ideogram as a model for composition is supplied by Antony Easthope. He summarizes: "It is not the supposedly iconic feature of Chinese writing that makes it an important model for poetry. Rather it is the way that the writing, in virtue of being ideographic rather than phonetic, foregrounds and insists upon the materiality of the signifier" (Easthope 140). For Pound, he says, the parataxis of Chinese offered an alternative to syntagmatic closure and led him to the image as the furthest alternative to rhetoric, combining the simultaneity of graphic representation with the temporal succession of verbal language (142). Laszlo Géfin concludes his book, Ideogram: History of a Poetic Method, with the observation that although the ideogrammic method has been interpreted by various poets in different "measures"--cumulative and contrastive juxtapositions, fugal, overlapping, collagistic, or elliptical groupings of particulars--poets as diverse as Pound, Olson, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan, Robert Creeley, and Gary Snyder, for example, all share the desire to circumvent through these strategies the logic and ratiocination of humanistic "positive capability" (137-38).

By now it is a commonplace to note that it is not, strictly speaking, true that, as Fenollosa/Pound wrote, "the Chinese language naturally knows no grammar" (Fenollosa 17). Both their 'collaborative' and their individual analyses of Chinese have been shown to be erroneous in several respects. For instance, although Chinese does not use tenses, declensions and formalized parts of speech, it does of course have recurring patterns, which is after all the broader meaning of the word 'grammar' (Newnham 99). Despite their misreadings, however, it would be impossible to deny the tremendous influence Fenollosa's and Pound's research had upon their contemporaries and continues to exert over the poetic line (or rhizome) which has grown out of their work. Although a few of Wah's earliest poems could be described as imagistic, his encounter with Fenollosa's essay, among other influences, culminated in a different poetic. While the visual (imagistic, pictogrammic and ideogrammic) is undeniably important in Wah's poetry, equally important is his work with parataxis, emulating in the English language the parataxis of Chinese.[7]

We have already looked at Wah's use of parataxis in "Mountain," a version of which appeared in his first book, Lardeau. Another poem from that collection, "Shape-of-a-Bird-with-Stars-in-Its-Eyes," also exhibits some of the "clipped and cryptic musicality" Barbour hears in the later "koan" poems:

Unnamed glacier
north
25 degrees west
north
look north tonight
at white
the white hump of ice
the moon the snow
bright
shape-of-a-bird-with-stars-in-its-eyes
go morning north
road that way to dawns and breakfasts
morning grass boots wet
and some morning don't stop to eat
with the boots keep walking
ten miles and find out
then go into it and into it
the wet grass morning glacier the
shape-of-a-bird
there where I arrive
with my wet boots on
what should I name it (Lardeau).

The language of "Shape-of-a-Bird-with-Stars-in-its-Eyes" is, like the structure of Chinese, paratactical and elliptical. In this poem, as in "Poem for Turning," all the verbs--"look," "go," "stop," "find," "keep walking," "arrive"--except the last one--"should name"--are in the present tense, possibly but not necessarily in the imperative mood. The effect of such indeterminacy of verb tense is of a recalcitrantly non-conjugating (or perhaps infinitely conjugating) verb. In fact, the Chinese verb does not conjugate and has no tenses or moods (Newnham 84).

Similarly, in the gradual, line-by-line accumulation of perceptions in lines six and seven ("at white/ the white hump of ice"), the addition of the phrase "hump of ice" and the slight variation produced extends the poem's perceptual process even in the absence, in those two lines, of a verb. In lines eight and nine ("the moon the snow/ bright"), the gaze shifts from the literal sky ("moon") to literal earth ("snow") to a purely visual and somewhat abstracted condition ("bright"). At the word "bright," the gaze both creates an atmosphere of brightness and focuses on itself in the act of gazing. As it is doing so, the next line, appropriately, enacts a naming. And all these shifts and changes and permutations occur without the use of a verb. The indeterminacy and the omission of verbs, rather than stilling the poem and freezing it at the level of nominalization, cause all the other resources of the poem to spring to action. Even the motion created by the linebreaks themselves functions in a verbal sense. The named glacier of the title, unnamed by the first line, is named at mid-point of the poem only to be unnamed in the last line. In the interstices between naming and unnaming (which is also a kind of naming) the particulars of the place and the poet's relationship with it are given. Naming is endowed with verbal properties; the subject assumes the workload of the predicate. "Motion," as Fenollosa observed, "leaks everywhere" (11).

Let us look at one final short poem from early in Wah's poetic career. The following is a section from Wah's second book, and his first long poem, Mountain:

fucking brown the fall airs O
  the end of August rains turn snow
    the dirt is hard around the rocks the leaves are warm
      around those rocks the snow is warm the dirt is
        O so Co-old

The first line is so elliptical it is difficult to know how to read it. Its semantic content really only emerges (and then only partially) in the retrospective light of the subsequent four lines of the poem. The ambiguity of the second line would seem to offer about three slightly different readings, one focussing on the weather, two on temporality: At the end of August, the rains turn to snowfalls; The end of the season of August rains shades into the time of snowfalls; It is now the end of August and the rains are turning to snow. In lines three and four, the prepositional phrases "around the rocks" and "around those rocks' float and attach themselves first to the preceding independent clause, then to the one following, eventually setting even the solidly independent clauses into oscillation.

Wah's poems undermine the English language's privileging of the verb and "its power to obliterate all other parts of speech" that, as Fenollosa noted, gives us "the model of terse fine style" (29). Alfred Bloom, in The Linguistic Shaping of Thought: A Study in the Impact of Language on Thinking in China and the West, describes a fundamental difference between Chinese and English in terms of the approaches of native speakers of each language to theoretical statements and the relative capacities of the two languages for theorization and particularization. It is worth quoting at some length from his experimental results, as they serve to corroborate some of the points in Fenollosa's essay and, more importantly, to clarify certain aspects of Wah's work:

> [By virtue of their structure or syntax] The Chinese sentences call attention to two conditions or two events and then, in addition, stipulate relationships holding between those conditions or events, so that the hearer or reader comes to consider the individual

> conditions or events on their own terms as well as the intercondition or interevent relationships that link them to one another. By contrast, the entified English sentences convert the subject/predicate descriptions of conditions or events into individual noun phrases and then insert those noun phrases into single subject/predicate frameworks, thereby in effect subordinating the conditions or events to the relationships that link them to one another. The hearer or reader is no longer led to consider the conditions or events on their own terms, but to consider them only as a function of the role they play in the relationships under discussion. The relationships themselves take on a reality of their own, a law-like quality, which derives from the fact that they are understood, not merely as descriptions of observable or imaginable real-world phenomena, but as examples of a different domain of discourse altogether, as theoretical explanatory frameworks designed to provide a clarifying perspective on the world of actual conditions and events and their interrelationships, while at the same time maintaining a certain cognitive distance from the speaker's or hearer's baseline model of that world (Bloom 46).

Wah's use of the indicative, the imperative and a pseudoimperative mood, his omission of pronouns, his elision of standard grammatical particles, and his superadding of the functions of different parts of speech to a single word or word cluster, like his construction of a synthetic middle voice,[8] translate not only the Chinese written character as a medium for poetry but some of the patterns of actual spoken Chinese as well. That is, Wah translates not just the paradigmatic model of the Chinese language; a phenomenological, oral/aural, "lived" Chinese gets translated as well. This translation of Chinese ideogrammic and speech structures into English deconstructs the meta-discourse Bloom isolates as attendant upon standard English syntax and 'un-dematerializes' the phonetically-based English word, creating the conditions necessary for listening, in the same moment, to the Otherness of both English and Chinese.

Translation has long been a strong interest of Wah's. He has done a number of homolinguistic translations, from English to English. Pictograms from the Interior of B.C., one of his most powerful and engaging books, is based on an operation which he calls "transcreation." In an interview with bpNichol in which they discuss the writing of Pictograms, Wah says that what he wanted to do was "to pay attention to all possible aspects of the 'trans' quality, the 'trans' aspect of transcreation, transliteration, transcription, trans anything" (Nichol, "Transcreation" 37-38). In another interview, Wah talks about "translating" some of Nicole Brossard's poems into English: "I would sound out the French word and translate the sound into something that sounds the same in English. . . . I just got very intrigued by the notion that one could intuit language by aspects of the language other than meaning" (Goddard 41). In this same interview Wah is asked to what extent he feels Chinese. His responses stress the duplicity of feelings of ethnic origin and identity:

> Race is not something you can feel or recognize, and that's one of the things I'm investigating in [Waiting for Saskatchewan]. It turns out race is food. I feel Chinese because of the food I enjoy, and that's because my father cooked Chinese food. But I don't know what it feels like to feel Chinese (41).

Wah is often asked about his ethnicity: he almost always responds not by talking about himself but by telling an abbreviated version of his father's astonishing and poignant story. The following excerpt, from a 1987 interview, is the first published instance I have found in which Wah actually speaks about the influence upon him of the Chinese language:

> My grandparents spoke Swedish, and my father and his parents spoke Chinese. I had to go to Chinese school

> for a little bit and I think it's made me an awkward speaker. I've always felt awkward about English. I felt that I would never be a good English speaker because my father and my Swedish grandparents felt that. They were always embarrassed about their English and my father was always embarrassed about his English. So I felt embarrassed about mine, too. I thought, "Well, of course, it's because I'm a half-breed." So I've embraced an English which is strange, weird, deconstructed, non-syntactic. I've embraced a more highly personal, jazz-oriented kind of language (Enright 36).

Wah's 'Chinese-ing' of English syntax in his poems is a dramatization of "heartography" and genealogy. The effect of such "strange" syntax is as of an imitation of a native Chinese speaker speaking English, perhaps almost an echo of Wah's father's voice. Although the father content does not appear until Breathin' My Name with a Sigh, Wah's eighth book, at the level of the 'Chinesed' syntax the father is present from the very earliest books, as we have seen.

Wah's translation of components of both spoken and written Chinese into his English-language poetry marks him as a "language poet," one of the inheritors of the Fenollosa/Pound line. Indeed, he allies himself with and is most interested in such language-centered writers as

Leslie Scalapino, Fanny Howe, Susan Howe, Lyn Hejinian, Nicole Brossard, and Daphne Marlatt, to name a few (Wah, "Which at First Seems . . . " 374-79). In The Dance of the Intellect: Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition, Marjorie Perloff lists some of the features the language poets have in common, namely, a shared attention to the foregrounding of sound structures, phonemic play, punning, rhythmic recurrence, rhyme and a frequent recourse to prose rather than poetry. An observation from Charles Bernstein's introduction to the Paris Review "Language Sampler," quoted by Perloff, is pertinent to Wah's writing:

> . . . there is a claim being made to a syntax . . . of absolute attention to the ordering of sound's syllables. . . . Not that this is "lyric" poetry, insofar as that term may assume a musical, or metric, accompaniment to the words: the music rather is built into the sequence of the words' tones, totally saturating the text's sound (Perloff 228; the ellipses are Perloff's).

But if the language poets open their ears to the sound resources of the English language, then Wah's listening is attuned to the music of a triple-valued writing and speech (pictographic, ideographic and phonographic) times two radically different language systems, English and Chinese. In Cantonese, the language his father spoke, the word 'wah' means to say, tell. It can refer to words, language, dialect, and picture. In Mandarin, it means speech (Chao, Cantonese Primer 237). Wah's very own name, then, in both English and Chinese, is suggestive of pictographs, ideographs and phonographs. And his syntax is one of the sites where, in a move described by Jacques Derrida as "the patient, crafty, quasi animal or vegetable, untiring, monumental . . . transformation of his proper name, rebus, into things, into the name of things" (Glas 5), he incorporates his multivalent name into textual tissue. For him, "Cathay" represents both his inheritance from his father and his poetic methodology.

So while Wah's syntax may seem to the reader to tax the boundaries even of poetic communication, this is, paradoxically, a result of the poet's desire to facilitate communication, with the dead as well as the living, and is a manifestation of what has been called "a proper name effect" (Derrida, The Ear of the Other 93). Through the medium of the proper name and the 'Chinesed' syntax in which it encodes itself, Wah translates himself to his father, and his father to himself, and in turn to all readers of his texts. It is our ear, the ear of the Other, our signalling of their difference and even their difficulty, then, that finally "signs" the Wah text. That is, since Wah's writing is translative in nature, it requires a reader's response first to intervene and at some points to divert the oscillation of this doubled translative activity outside its own operation and secondly to ascribe to the work its 'originality.' Someone has to resolve, or at least pose, the question, if 'Wah' is signed all through these texts at the level of the syntax, then to whom does this signature belong--father? son? or the ghost(s) of (two) language(s)?

Wah's radical syntactic experimentation frees translation itself from its secondary status as mere repetition of the always already written, from the spectacle of 'lip-synching' the original. His work releases the compositional and writerly potential of translation. Translation, for him, is itself writing, not just a transcription of a prior text. Wah's Chinese-ing of English syntax encrypts and disseminates his name and ethnicity, as well as his poetic influences and genealogy, between two languages. As Derrida conjectures, the desire at work in every proper name can be expressed as a call to "translate me, don't translate me" (102). Wah's translation poetics simultaneously translates the father's Chinese name and conceals that translation in the Otherness of his English mother tongue.

II. Robert Kroetsch's Poetry:

The Translative Act as a Medium for Poetry

A phonic diagram of the poetics of Robert Kroetsch's long poems from The Stone Hammer Poems and Seed Catalogue to The Sad Phoenician and beyond might chart his poetic development as moving from the pub as poem to the poem as hubbub. The transformation from pub to hubbub involves not a progression as such in Kroetsch's work but a move from narrative, tale, anecdote, story, and joke to sound, disruption, textual activity, and performance. The reason for this transformation of Kroetsch's poetry is more precise and complex than a tension or a dialectic. As my hypothesized phonic diagram hints, Kroetsch's poetics is structured upon a translation between speech and writing. Robert Lecker, Frank Davey and Dennis Cooley have each written about the relation between speech and writing in Robert Kroetsch's poetics and in general. Their work on these issues will be the subject of this chapter.

1. The pub as poem, the poem as hubbub

> [T]here exists no locutive grammar (a grammar of what is spoken and not of what is written; and to begin with: a grammar of spoken French) (Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text 50).

In "Bordering On: Robert Kroetsch's Aesthetic," Robert Lecker comments on Kroetsch's recourse to the oral tradition of the prairie beer parlour as a residual place where "the story is created through the combined efforts of the teller and a group of interjecting listeners who qualify and question the ongoing tale" (13). Lecker also sets out to demonstrate how Kroetsch's metaphorical concept of borders (geographical, temporal, national, and literary) informs his poetics. Focussing on the poet as "borderman," he considers Kroetsch's use of the oral tradition and its effects upon both the writing and the writer. According to Lecker, Kroetsch's "predominant strategy" for dealing with the contradiction of writing down spoken words as a means of uninventing the written world

> involves textual catharsis: he purges himself of his complicity by investing it in his writing. The story becomes a liar forced to play out the writer's own ferocious doubleness. Freed, the author sentences his words to paper, commits them to act out the duplicity he recognizes at the centre of his art. This is why Kroetsch's works are obsessed with the

> translation of doubleness into structure, metaphor, and theme (18).

Lecker does not at this point distinguish between Kroetsch's poetry and his prose. Although his use of the word 'story' suggests that he is concentrating in this passage on the fiction, the lack of any other specificity, along with his mention of the oral poet later in the same paragraph, suggests that Lecker would ascribe this strategy to both modes of Kroetsch's writing. Lecker argues, on the one hand, that Kroetsch attempts to hear the prescripted world in actual speech and then to write it into the literary tradition. The act of notation somehow transfers, converts or "translates" what Lecker names (and renames) as the "duplicity" or "doubleness" of the relation between speech and writing away from the writer himself into the text and the literary system.

Lecker's formulation raises a number of complicated and interesting questions. For example, what is the nature and function of notation with regard to each of speech and writing as two distinct models of composition? What in his formulation is the implicit hierarchical order between speech and writing? In places, Lecker's description of Kroetsch's strategy implies that speech enjoys priority. He refers, for example, to "the oral tradition upon which traditional verse patterns are founded" (20). Are "doubleness" and "duplicity" synonymous? And how do doubleness and/or duplicity get translated into literary structure, metaphor and theme? Is this operation a "translation" in any but a metaphorical sense?

Lecker, judiciously evoking Kroetsch's own statements of poetics, posits a number of subsidiary solutions to the problems associated with "bordering on" orality and literacy. He suggests that "To move in these middles is to participate in the dialectic expressing Kroetsch's borderline world" (6). Taking the lead from an interview statement by Kroetsch that the doubleness of his experience of living in both Canada and the United States has a parallel in Canadian experience at large, Lecker categorizes the tension between speech and writing in Kroetsch's work as a dialectic. It is significant that among the revisions Lecker's article underwent between publication in the Journal of Canadian Studies and in his Twayne book on Kroetsch there is the substitution of "in these middles" for "between two forces" and "translation of doubleness" for "translation of duplicity," thus marking a move toward decreased specificity of this tension as a dialectic between two clearly defined opposites. Lecker posits that the way out of the dialectic for the writer is to position himself at "that border point at which opposites unite and undergo a metamorphosis" (6). This imaginary site of metamorphosis is, presumably, the site of composition.

Marshalling catharsis, dialectic, doubleness, and metamorphosis to develop his theory of borderlines, Lecker implicitly constructs an essentially rhetorical stance on the part of the poet, and he then has to work hard to avoid stranding him in dialectic and paradox, alienated from the process and economy of writing. In order to supplement the notion of a dialectic between two conflicting forces, Lecker resorts to the writer's own subjectivity and the concept of catharsis as a psychological or dramatic technique for the resolution of conflict. He conflates the process of writing with catharsis. Should writing as catharsis fail, however, Lecker's backup system is the doppelgänger effect. Insofar as the writer's own subjectivity is implicated in this paradoxical situation between writing and speech, Lecker says, "The border finds its human equivalent in the doppelganger [sic], while the doppelganger itself becomes the metaphoric expression of an internal landscape constructed of paired opposites simultaneously affirming and negating each other" (11-12). Focussing on the figure of the doppelgänger allows Lecker to 'duplicate' the element of doubleness in the border metaphor he exploits. Moreover, the doppelgänger also permits him to point to processes of transformation and "becoming" as metaphors for compositional time and method. By thus guaranteeing intentionality, the process of composition is ostensibly saved.

In this connection Lecker elaborates on the trickster figure as double of the oral poet. For Lecker, the trickster, as "a dialectical being who has the ability to move between poles," "embodies the borderline consciousness that draws Kroetsch to metaphors of two-sidedness" (16). If the trickster is allied with the oral poet, however, the problem arises as to how the dialectical trickster relates to writing. The outcome of Lecker's argument is that in the name of his attempt to find a relation between speech and writing the writer's position must fluctuate. On the one hand, he is external to the dialectic posited between speech and writing and, on the other hand, he is subjected to doubling and catharsis. As Linda Hutcheon notes, "Kroetsch, the master of doubletalking paradox, drives his critics into paradoxical formulations" ("Seeing Double" 162).

But while Lecker correctly points to Kroetsch's own announced fascination with the tensions of equilibrium and paradox, additional problems emerge from his essay. For example, when he equates the contemporary Alberta beer drinker with some abstract, anonymous, pre-literate poet in a past, probably European, society, Lecker inadvertently deconstructs his own argument that Kroetsch uninvents in order to invent in the face of the powerful

British and American literary traditions. No matter what level of education or intellectual competence they have attained, the 'bullshit artists' sitting around the table in the prairie beer parlour are surrounded by and immersed in not oral but literate or even post-literate culture. As Robert Wilson observes, "Perhaps it would be more accurate to think of Alberta as a verbally reticent culture, or even as post-literate, than as an oral one" (Neuman and Wilson 171).

Furthermore, Lecker is mistaken about traditional oral poetry and poetics. He states, "Originally created by poets who could not read or write, the oral poem was improvised, rather than composed according to preexisting verse patterns. In this sense, the defining features of oral poetry are spontaneity, idiosyncrasy, and personal expression" (14). These statements are contrary to the large body of research into oral-formulaic composition, as the name of this burgeoning field implies. As Eric Havelock has demonstrated in his Preface to Plato and elsewhere, oral compositions are not spontaneous and idiosyncratic but very highly coded expressions, relying on traditional formulae, which change very little over time, as mnemonic devices. Dennis Tedlock, who has devoted considerable research to the problems of the transcription and translation of oral productions into writing, goes a step further and contends that the so-called oral epic always exists in close proximity to writing. It may contain oral residues and be performed by illiterates, he says, but the epic is a marvel of small-scale sound engineering greatly facilitated by alphabetic writing ("Beyond Logocentrism" 250-51). Hinging so much of his argument upon a superceded and romantic notion of oral poetics prevents Lecker from contributing substantially to an understanding of this aspect of the borderline stance he himself otherwise delineates so carefully. In the absence of a theory of the nature of the relation between speech and writing, the process of composition becomes obfuscated, blurred or misplaced, and Lecker must expend considerable energy trying out various "borderline" solutions to restore this process to his description of Kroetsch's work.

. . . . . .

> I began with the idea that I could expand our English by investing it with Nordic modes of expression. In the end I felt vaguely ghettoized. Instead of expanding the language I sensed that I had given the cue to have myself confined to an "ethnic" group about which I still know precious little. I believe this is a typical experience.
>
> Because languages came as punishment for wrongdoing, I think the myth of the tower of Babel frightens cultures with a Judeo-Christian orientation into being repelled by multilingualism. Multilingualism seems generally sacrilegious and almost Satanically rebellious. This is something to consider, no less than the myth of Armageddon which seems to be driving the Western world into acquiescence about nuclear war. It was prophesied,

> so they make it happen. One of our first tasks I believe is to get rid of the myths that bind us and instead allow other languages to flourish, interweave and colour our experience. We will be richer for it and with 3,000 to 4,000 possibilities the mixtures of tone and aesthetic experience are endless (Kristjana Gunnars, "Words on Multilingualism" 8).

A more recent article, published in 1988, "A Young Boy's Eden: Notes on Recent 'Prairie' Poetry," by Frank Davey, questions the politics of prairie poets' use of oral traditions as generative sources for their poetry. Even though Kroetsch is exempted from the ideological blindspots Davey points to and is in fact held up as a model worthy of imitation by other poets, the article deserves examination here first because Kroetsch's influence upon many prairie poets and critics has been so considerable that it is instructive to consider how various other writers may have read, or misread, him. Second, Davey draws attention to several problems regarding the appropriation and conversion of the real and/or reconstructed discourse of oral speech communities into literary texts.[1]

Davey argues that a nostalgic desire to "honour" a past vernacular culture can result, paradoxically, in a writer's estrangement from that very culture and even in a colonizing relationship with the subjects of representation: "Literacy offers to represent the interests of orality; the present offers to represent the interests of the past" (220). In Davey's view, the prairie poet who does not mark her or his texts as self-consciously constructed is liable to operate in bad faith: "Here a second generation seeks through writing both to honour a culture it has abandoned and to vicariously enjoy the values of the abandoned culture" (221). From Davey's depiction one forms an image of the reader of such honouring, if not honourable, prairie poems as comparable to the visitor to a prairie regional museum who tours the displays thanking her lucky stars that, unlike her mother and grandmother, she no longer has to wash her family's clothes with her bare hands on a rough scrub board, with water that has to be hauled and then heated on a woodstove and with suds made from lye. The emotion stirred by such displays, apparently, is not one of political or historical awareness or gratitude and amazement at what one's parents, grandparents and their friends accomplished but one of self-satisfied smugness and gratitude for progress as represented by the names of Viking, Inglis and General Electric.[2]

But perhaps the most important points raised by Davey in terms of the present discussion emerge from his critique of Dennis Cooley's essay, "The Vernacular Muse in Prairie Poetry." Davey argues that Cooley's ideological project fails and that he ends up affirming the binary oppositions he sets out to deconstruct. As Davey suggests, "the oppositions between margin and centre, or orality and print, are less clear-cut than Cooley declares and highly vulnerable to subversion" (225). The purpose of Davey's argument is to point to the repressed ideological assumptions underlying much recent prairie poetry, and so he does not substantially develop the notion of the 'opposition' between oral and print cultures, but he does state that "Cooley's emphasis on both 'appropriation' as the way in which an oral discourse can be brought into the written, and on 'use' of 'colonized discourses' as a way of 'speaking from or for minority groups' is, to say the least, problematical" (225). Moreover, Davey isolates what he sees as the two tasks of the type of poet who wishes to conceal his or her own articulation in order to present an unproblematical relationship to the persons or mythologies honoured. The first task is an archaeological recovery of "what was 'really said'"; the second is translative in nature.

Davey places the word 'translation' in single quotation marks to signal his restricted, unconventional and highly critical use of that term. As distinguished from the archaeological task to recover the "really said," the translational task is to simulate (or dissimulate). He writes:

> Or the task is that of translation--to simulate the 'really said' or 'really thought' in a plausible

> written text, as [Monty] Reid 'translates' Karst's fragmentary memoirs into coherent monologues, or [Kristjana] Gunnars 'translates' the records of Icelandic 'narratives' by the participants. The resultant texts defer to the illusion of the speaking voice they attempt to produce, and posit a reader who will also wish to produce that voice (227).

According to Davey, the task of the poet who 'translates' from a spoken to a written economy is to inject literariness--the values of coherence, completeness, form, and narrative--into the documentary material and in the process to (re)constitute a written facsimile of the spoken. In these poets' work, he says, translation is a unidirectional practice, working from speech to writing only: "Here writers write 'on behalf' of those who cannot or could not write, or who were on occasion contemptuous of writing skills" (220). The poets pose as faithful translators of their respective ethnic milieux into literate English and literary culture. Davey sees their faithful dissimulation as attempting to represent an unproblematical, because experiental, 'real' which pre-exists the text.

In an article about anthropologists' translations of native oral compositions into written English verse, Dennis Tedlock, like Davey, also interrogates a politics of translation:

> What happens, in the passage from the dramatic art of storytelling to the literary art of verse-measuring, is a transformation of the constantly changing sounds and silences of action into regularized typographical patterns that can be comprehended at a single glance by a symmetry-seeking eye. David Antin points to the role of the eye when he questions whether meter plays an important role in the sound of English blank verse, arguing that the printed lines of such verse are best understood not as a "sound structure" but as "a visual framing effect" that "places whatever language is within the frame in a context of 'literature'" ("On the Translation of Style in Oral Narrative" 61).

The writers whom Davey promotes in his critique are those who "frame" their texts by foregrounding bi- or multi-directional "'translation'" between speech and writing. He offers Kroetsch as an example of how a writer can write about the past by framing his use of vernacular discourse within questioning, self-reflexive structures (226, 228). Thus, Davey takes a stance not unrelated to that of Lecker. Whereas Lecker slightly favors an oral and rhetorical model, Davey, valorizing the framing device of self-reflexivity, privileges the written. While they do offer useful maps for reading, these two otherwise similar metaphors of the border and the frame, perhaps because of their territorial, visual, aesthetic, and writerly associations, finally do not adequately take into account the dynamic between speech and writing.

Whether self-reflexivity is submerged in an illusion of presence invoked by an imitation of the spoken voice, or whether it is overtly, playfully or problematically displayed through various textual emblems and devices, privileging self-reflexivity as a value[3] functions to circumvent or evacuate the question of the relation between speech and writing. After all, self-reflexivity, or metadiscourse, is present in both spoken and written economies. As Paul de Man remarks in the interview appended to the end of his essay on Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator," "The only people who believe that there is language that is not theoretical are professors of literature. . . . If you get popular uses of language, they are highly, infinitely theoretical, they are constantly metalinguistic, they constantly turn back upon language" (102). To a writerly reader self-consciously "reading Canadian reading," "The project of honouring a particular past, as in Suknaski and Gunnars, is probably more quickly exhausted as a project and a politics than is a project of interrogating (as in Kroetsch, Arnason and Dyck) how one can write about a past, or (as in Cooley and Sproxton) how particular class interests have entered into the construction of history" (emphasis added; 228).

However, for the reader in whose name one might think Davey is ostensibly writing, at least partly, the reader for whom class, for example, has been a barrier to acquiring a thorough knowledge of and preference for postmodern texts and literary theory, Davey's reading tastes may not be de rigueur.[4] Second, it is not insignificant that, in the foregoing quotation, every one of the poets whose work is approved by Davey as politically correct holds a Ph.D. and is male. Of the two whose work he cites as falsely, inappropriately or naively "honouring a particular past" neither one holds a Ph.D. or a full-time, continuing academic appointment. One of them, Kristjana Gunnars, is the only woman poet in this clutch of poets. Lorna Crozier's work is quoted, but not discussed, in the body of Davey's essay. For Davey to raise the phrase "a young boy's eden" from Patrick Friesen's poem to the title of his article without questioning gender issues, along with the politics of style, is a serious blind spot, especially when Cooley's essays themselves, which Davey otherwise so thoroughly criticizes, are extremely problematical concerning the issue of gender.

Third, Davey's veiled call for, if not a universal appeal, at least a broader and less regional appeal to "readers in other regions, readers addressed intertextually at moments when the text engages the problematics of writing and historiography" (227-28), would seem to militate against his own desire to politicize the textual activities of reading and writing. If the local is not political, then for whom, for which constituency, is Davey problematizing literary culture? Surely one aspect of a raised political consciousness is an awareness of the lived experiences of people from different regions, ethnic groups and social classes. Nowhere does Davey suggest that local references ought to be edited out of poems, but his call for greater readability based upon framed narratives and self-reflexivity, along with his call for a certain homogenization of poetic discourse, assumes, in the first place, that the proper readers of poetry are the educated who live elsewhere and emphatically not the people about whom or to whom a poet such as Suknaski or Gunnars is in fact writing. It is dangerous to assume that these two poets, for instance, are not read by the people whose ancestors their poems "honour" or that they have fewer readers among these communities than among the urban population. Unfortunately, despite his protestations against Cooley's "rigorous dichotomy between high and low" and despite his contention that Cooley "offers little evidence that the 'high' exists in Western Canada as a large and valorized body of writing" (222), Davey's argument in favour of "framed" texts bears the connotations of the kind of culture which prefers its art framed and designated as such. He himself exports the very kind of high culture which he implies does not exist in Western Canada as a significant force. He may be right that Cooley has not adequately demonstrated the existence in Western Canada of such a perspective, but Davey's own argument functions to remind us of its influence in and from other quarters.

Moreover, Davey is mistaken when he assumes that urban prairie culture has completely abandoned (except for nostalgia and a certain sense of indebtedness) its participation in the rural and multilinguistic environment of its roots. Certainly all of the poets Davey discusses in his essay are highly literate, and some, though not all, and those not all of the time, live in cities. But there are other poets as well, largely self-styled, who publish poetry in the small town and rural newspapers of the places where they live, who self-publish and, not entirely unlike their urban and more literary counterparts, sell their books to their friends and neighbours. If such writers go unrecognized, is their reputed 'badness' a result of their attempts to write in their own voices, or is it attributable rather to their attempts to imitate the 'high' literary art of an era which has been abandoned and superceded in the more populated, more educated, faster-moving centres where books are more readily available? It is noteworthy too that while it is true that the majority of prairie people now live in cities, they are not all of the people. Some people still live in the villages and towns of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and many prairie poets write with a profound awareness of the present, not just the past, lives of rural people who may or may not ever have access to their books.[5]

In short, to gesture on the one hand as if to politicize textual practices and on the other to appeal for less regional, less vernacular, and more writerly productions is to advocate a poetics and a politics that betrays a lack of awareness of the geopolitical conditions of contemporary prairie life and, ironically, to recapitulate the same error Davey himself sets out to correct in Reading Canadian Reading when he criticizes those for whom certain critical theorists such as some of the French and the Americans become "nationless, even timeless figures, theorists whose concepts somehow exist independently of space-time order" (8). Davey's ideological critique borrows too uncritically from figures from elsewhere and applies their principles wholesale to a geography and way of life and artistic production that is somewhat different in composition.

Can there be no poetics for honouring the ancestors in voices which meet them halfway, as, for instance, in texts such as those in which, to quote Davey, "Gunnars constructs English monologues for apparently unilingually Icelandic-speaking immigrants" (215)? Kristjana Gunnars is multilingual and a proficient and prolific translator. Surely we cannot conclude that her own relationship to the English language and her decision to write her long poems about the Manitoba Icelanders in English must be viewed as unproblematical simply because we too speak and write English. Because English is our first language, we seem to require frames in order to foreground that language for us. However, when Gunnars writes in English, is she simply representing lives or speech, as those of us would who can only write in English? Or is she translating? Are texts which attempt to honour the past by reproducing real or imagined speech in volumes of written poetry and which refer to themselves as poems and books effacing their self-conscious construction, as Davey suggests? Or are these signifying marks of pastness or temporality, of writing in the English language when another language might be more appropriate to the conventions of realism, and of deliberately drawing attention to the fact of having been written and published as poems and books not the very framing devices Davey recommends?

Davey's critique is in other respects a telling, complex and provocative one, and it is not my wish to trivialize or deflate its worth or to soliloquize on behalf of the rural prairies. Nor do I have space in the present project to discuss in detail the texts of Kristjana Gunnars. However, the Icelanders about whom Gunnars has written are not, as Davey assumes, "rustic" or "unsophisticated" (218). Icelanders have a history of literacy that extends back nine or more centuries. More importantly, Gunnars in her poems is not merely speaking or writing on behalf of the illiterate, the oppressed or the overworked, nor is she simply recording "what was 'really said.'" Her poems are not representations of actual, prior speech events: they are translations--from vestiges of spoken and written language to literature, from Icelandic into English, and from the English of the dominant culture to the English of the Icelanders themselves. If Gunnars gives her Icelanders English instead of Icelandic words, then surely the audience that she has in mind is not only that audience which Davey characterizes as believing itself to have "unproblematical historical connections to the persons or mythologies honoured" (226). The reader reading prairie reading must not overlook, cancel or reduce the translation poetics of such books as Gunnars's and Suknaski's either to the mere transcription of speech or to mere representation. If a frame is required, then the frame or screen of translation is as complex and self-referential as any. As Jacques Derrida remarks:

> In the limits to which it is possible, or at least appears possible, translation practices the difference between signified and signifier. But if this difference is never pure, no more so is translation, and for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of transformation: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another. We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some "transport" of pure signifieds from one language to another, or within one and the same language, that the signifying instrument would leave virgin and untouched (Positions 20).

If translation practices the difference between signified and signifier, then texts written out of the history and phenomenological, lived reality of a particular ethnic community practice the difference not only between signifier and signified but also the differences between languages and the differences between speech and writing in two or more languages. Putting the word 'translation' into single quotation marks as Davey does results first of all in a failure to account for the relation between speech and writing, second, in a dismissal of the literary productions of ethnic writers as being of limited scope and, third, in an erasure of translation poetics in general.

. . . . . .

> What I think I do know about writers of our own time leads me to believe that we (and I mean men and women) do not have muses. We have psychology and "shrinks," lovers and pets; but we do not have muses. We have drugs and alcohol and money; we have gurus, astral travel, and Carl Sagan. We have Columbus and Challenger. Have or had Marilyn and Bogey, the Dukes of Hazzard and the Dupes of Dallas, but we do not have muses (Phyllis Webb, "The Muse Figure" 114).

Dennis Cooley knows intimately, celebrates joyfully and analyzes brilliantly the constantly metalinguistic, disruptive, subversive, infinitely theoretical qualities of vernacular speech. He writes _about_ the vernacular, and he speaks and writes it too. Cooley is bilingual.

Two of the essays in his book _The Vernacular Muse_ deal specifically with the relation between orality and literacy in prairie writing. Though there are several points of agreement between us, Cooley's project is more or less the opposite of mine. He sets up (or reinforces) a dualism within the body between the two organs of the ear and the eye. Then he maps the relation between speech and writing onto this version of the dualist body. This traditional, phallogocentric organization of the body is used, paradoxically, to argue for the vitality, exuberance, strength, merit, and innovation of a vernacular poetry. Thus, though Cooley's organization of the body and/of writing provides insightful, political, provocative, and delicious readings of several cultural, institutional and literary texts, as might be predicted a project founded upon the phallogocentric body can only ultimately fail to create either a truly subversive verse project or a new version of the body.

One of the early symptoms of the ultimate collapse of Cooley's argument is hinted at by the title of the shorter of the two essays, "Placing the Vernacular: The Eye and the Ear in Saskatchewan Poetry." This essay, because of its brevity relative to "The Vernacular Muse in Prairie Poetry," takes the delimited territory of the province of Saskatchewan, not the entire prairie region, in order first to 'place' the vernacular in terms of poetry at large, to provide a kind of spatially-limited test case, before attempting to theorize "the vernacular muse" within but not solely in relation to geographical boundaries, and to align the vernacular with a particular organ and faculty of the body. Cooley actually refers to his mapping of the body of Saskatchewan poetry according to the organs of the eye and the ear as divvying it up under two "jurisdictions" (1). Thus he installs an analogy between the political jurisdiction of a prairie province and the body as subject of juridical power. The order of the two-part title of his essay indicates two things: first, that the overriding critical project is to place, valorize and consolidate the use of the vernacular in poetry and, second, that the bodily functions are accessory to this endeavour. In the history of Canadian criticism, geography has been the more or less single topographical feature ascribed to prairie art, often correlated with a thematic approach (themes such as distance, solitude, meterological and economic hardship, the isolated and strained human figure or figures, the failed artist, the failed artist's wife, etc.). Cooley wishes to acknowledge the importance of the geographical imperative in prairie poetry but at the same time to find new and vigorous ways of discussing prairie writing in terms of its linguistic, literary historical, generic, semiotic, and many other properties. He wishes to inject some sexual energy into this staid, old-fashioned, colonial and dismissive vision of prairie writing. In order to effect this radical rereading, Cooley selects the aperture of the ear through which, he argues, vigour can flow from the body to the text and vice versa.

Unfortunately, in both essays Cooley seems to have in mind two implicit figures representing these conflicting and contending views of prairie poetry. The colonialist view is represented for him by "a facsimile Englishman and a transplanted Englishwoman" ("The Vernacular Muse" 169), while the indigenous view is incarnated by the type of street-wise, smart-talking young man who would likely have been told repeatedly by the strait-laced and strict, if vulnerable, schoolteacher to, in Cooley's vocabulary, "smarnen up." The duality inspired by these two shadows is at the root of the most problematical aspect of "Placing the Vernacular." First overlooking the facsimile Englishman, perhaps because of his deemed facsimile virility, Cooley then goes on to use the shorter of the two essays to eject all women writers from his theory of the vitality and generative powers of vernacularly-based prairie poetry.[6] Having ejected our writing from his main consideration, poetry which transcribes the vernacular onto the page, he proceeds in the lengthier essay, "The Vernacular Muse," to further develop his theory and examples.

It is not until three-quarters of the way through "Placing the Vernacular" that Cooley overtly states that his dichotomy between eye and ear poets coincides for him with gender. Prior to this point, identifying and demonstrating various differences between the two kinds of poets, he begins rhetorically to refer to the former using feminine pronouns and the latter using masculine pronouns. He describes the eye poet, for example, in the following way: "Set apart from what she observes, uninvolved in it other than in her capacity as isolated observer and respondent, unengaged in any dialogue, she looks out upon a world, sometimes as it exists in the mind's eye, a realm that is passive and like as not silent" (6). This deliberately gendered description of the eye poet might alone have suggested to Cooley something of the gender politics involved in such a poetic stance, if indeed it could be proven beyond a single example to apply to more women poets than he discusses. Conversely, his description of the male, "ear" poet might similarly have tipped him off to the social inequities implicit in his binary structure. Cooley praises the male, ear poet for his engagement with an implied reader or auditor: "In oral poetry (and we realize that it too, the poetry _itself_, is authored in solitude) the speaker behaves as if he seeks to be heard, as if he has someone beside him as he speaks and to whom he speaks, even as that audience remains in fact absent to the poet and to the reader. The rhetoric in such poems simulates public exchange" (11). The obvious questions begin with the matter of which scene of public exchange is open to women poets? How do we inscribe "the snap of speech in the street" (19) when the streets are only open to us during shopping hours and after-hours only when accompanied by a man? Or when the topic of "the snap of speech in the street" is frequently how we look or walk or what someone would like to do to us had he world enough and time? How do women poets sing the song of the market place when women's bodies are still commodities advertised, bought and sold by men to other men? Where is the auditor who will assure us an ear for our words?

In order to legitimize this equation he is promoting, and to avoid a discussion of gender politics, Cooley turns to Walter J. Ong for the cause of the personal or private "inwardness" of the "eye" poet. Cooley coolly informs us that Ong attributes this inwardness to the development of print culture: it is the fault of the typewriter. Ong, however, does not make the same gender distinctions as Cooley. Although Cooley quotes him on the poet of inwardness, whom Cooley identifies as female, the pronoun Ong uses is masculine (12).

Finally, on page fourteen of a nineteen-page article, Cooley states directly that "It seems to me that what I am calling 'eye' poems tend to be written by women, and 'ear' poems to be written by men" (14). However, having come out with it at last, he moves quickly to add two other hasty generalizations[7] rather than examine or offer any additional possible reasons for this apparent phenomenon. Instead he rushes on to quote for the second time the same passages from Allen's and Hyland's poems[8] as illustrations of his controversial "jurisdictions." Allen's poem "transplant" is about a woman displaced, out of place, transplanted from the "forgotten & imagined" place of her father's land to the present place from which she is writing the poem. As a poem of displacement, it could have been a clue to Cooley that the lack of an audience to address either in the vernacular or in more 'serious' poetic language might have to do with her condition as a woman and an immigrant. Instead he decides that the "Hesitancies in the voice, set into the lines," are indebted to "the technology of writing and of print" which makes possible such "nuance" or "delicacy of phrasing." "You don't have to raise your voice in print culture," Cooley observes (16).[9]

What is perhaps even more interesting, however, is Hyland's "Power Steering," which Cooley applauds because, among other features, "the speech is loaded with the speaker's wholehearted commitment . . . to his fantasy and his desire to win somebody over to his enthusiasms . . . , and that as a result it foregrounds the second person in contrast to the first person of the other poetry" (18). This addressee, this second person, to whom the poem speaks, is, of course, another male who at least potentially shares the speaker's enthusiasms. But what about the third person in the poem? Here is "Power Steering":

> Scrawny's got himself this nifty sorta knob dealie
> ya clamp onto one sidea your steerin wheel
> Gotta be onea the greatest gizmos invented
> Imagine ya got your arm around some dame eh
> ya just grabaholda this here doomajig
> spin it around hard, lay it to the boards
> and no trouble at all ya got yourself a doughnut
> and the dame's smeared against ya real romantic like
> (18).

What about "the dame" in the poem? Furthermore, what about the second person whom the poem addresses who is not a male but a female reader, and who, if the poem functions dramatically and phatically, as Cooley says these kinds of poems do (8-9), finds herself, as she reads the poem, in a doughnut, a UE, a tailspin, a power turn, "smeared against" some guy auspiciously named Scrawny and his sorta knob dealie? While no exploitation is committed in this particular poem, nevertheless the unattractive scenario it presents to this female reader, and perhaps to other readers as well, suggests that it may be a less than ideal example upon which to privilege the writing of one gender at the expense of another.

Using his study of the localized, delimited constituency of Saskatchewan as a basis upon which to describe women as what he calls "eye poets," in the longer essay Cooley all but completely ignores our work. Having, he thinks, established the superiority of the organ of the ear and having attempted to show that women poets do not write for the ear,[10] Cooley listens to "the vernacular muse" to pen a hymn of critical praise to the poet who writes poems about male bonding through sports activities and about picking up girls in cars. As Frank Davey correctly points out with regard to Cooley's reliance upon various dichotomies, not just this one: "The repressed ideological project is to deconstruct the culture's inherited binary constructions which have forced it into high/low, father/mother, authority/subversion, centre/margin models. But . . . Cooley is drawn . . . here . . . into affirming these dichotomies by asserting the culturally despised alternative against the privileged other" (Davey, "A Young Boy's Eden" 224).

In the name of a poetry with the laudable aim of engendering "the bold somatic weight of words in the mouth, the whole body" ("The Vernacular Muse" 189), the feminine body is elided and smothered, and prairie women's poetry is "smeared." Having bracketed women's poetry out, Cooley can configure male vernacular speech as the muse in the service of men's poetry. In the conclusion to "Placing the Vernacular," at the point where one might expect some qualification or further insight into the dynamics of the relation between eye and ear, for instance, Cooley comments:

> . . . I will only say we can cultivate *both* of them, enjoy each for what it is. I would add that one of the most exciting forms prairie poetry recently has taken, and may continue to take, lies in a combination of these practices within a single text (not *simply* in the existence of them side by side in different writers or texts). Think of Birk Sproxton (19).

After pointing out all the limitations to "eye" poetry and aligning it with poetry written primarily by women, Cooley mildly suggests that we can enjoy both "eye" and "ear" poetry for what they are. He then states that the most exciting contemporary texts being written on the prairies combine these two practices or faculties, though he does not elaborate on the dynamics of this combination. The immediate example he offers of this emergent innovative style is another male poet.[11]

Probably the most egregious fault of Cooley's two essays though, and the root of his exclusion of women poets from his prairie republic, is his claiming and colonizing of the mother tongue as, and only as, the male vernacular. Cooley claims that his "ear" poetry "would coincide fairly well with Ong's 'secondary orality'" ("Placing the Vernacular" 5). In fact, however, the poetics Cooley is seeking to valorize would be more correctly described as a second wave of primary orality supported and promoted by male bonding activities.[12] When in "The Vernacular Muse" Cooley provides the reader with a summary of the salient features of orally based expression as isolated by Ong, he does not in fact summarize Ong's category of secondary orality at all. Rather he lists the features of primary orality and then conflates vernacular or "ear" poetry with primary orality, a condition which, according to Ong, has not obtained for centuries.[13] It is erroneous then to conclude as he does that "With no great effort, we can make extensive and compelling connections between the oral culture Ong describes and certain features of contemporary prairie poetry" (196). By reinvoking a lost, preliterate culture as a license to "reopen some space for orality in the face of a print culture which, allowing for Derrida's larger argument, has consolidated itself as _the_ measure of literature, and which in its applications on the prairies works in damaging ways" (197), Cooley is eventually led to the following statement: "But by speaking in the mother tongue, those who have been excluded can call into being an other, another world. In their dream of cultural autonomy, the depreciated language they speak enables them to resist the impositions of a father tongue, which is the respected and learned way of writing, duly installed in academies of one kind or another" (204). Reserving the label of 'father tongue' for the canonical literary tradition and the acts of its enforcers, Cooley co-opts the term 'mother tongue' for male poets writing in the vernacular. With neither father nor mother tongue available to them, and because Cooley apparently cannot 'hear' women's vernacular speech, it is not surprising that women poets are astonishingly absent from his critical analysis. Cooley thus commits the very error he so passionately argues against. I cannot but recall his own quotation from Jean-François Lyotard's _The Postmodern Condition_. According to Lyotard, "the efficiency gained by eliminating, or threatening to eliminate, a player from the language game one shares with him" is "terrorist" (Lyotard 63).

Like Frank Davey who, in "A Young Boy's Eden," dismisses translation as a valid poetic in the name of a poststructuralist self-reflexivity, Cooley too, anxious to up the ante on prairie poetry by placing it within postmodern aesthetics,[14] relies too heavily on a plethora of postmodern terms and techniques and fails to consider the crucial question of the relationship between speech and writing in terms of the composition of the text.[15] Cooley also mentions but then overlooks the possibilities of translation as a model for this relation. Commenting on Seed Catalogue he observes: "We're looking here at something close to a documentary muse. The sections taken over (translated) from seed catalogues, where they were offered as commercial come-ons, become in this new configuration wonderfully sensuous, downright sensual" (201). No one could fault Cooley for being distracted by the lushly sensual properties of the language of Seed Catalogue and thereby overlooking the translation poetics of that book. Indeed Cooley's engagement with the text that he calls "a love song to plants" (202) is a model of critical writing.[16] However, in keeping with his own outlaw stance, Cooley casts the poet as "some kind of literary Robin Hood" (200) and largely misses the version of the poet as translator. In Cooley's critical mythology, Kroetsch (and I must emphasize that this is Cooley's, not Kroetsch's, vision of the poet), as this literary and/but lusty Robin Hood with an agricultural bent, "gourds up his loins" and sings "his masturbatory song" but laments that "he has no one to receive his seeds / words, to carry them away pregnant with thought." "Orgasmic in his utterance," his is the "spermatic" word (202-203).

How can we account for this sudden absence of the ear of the other in Cooley's scenario? The vernacular poet, who is, Cooley has informed us, assured of his auditor, appears to be in serious danger of losing touch with him or her. Certainly the desired female auditor is out of earshot. If the vernacular song is "communally based" (196), as Cooley insists, then surely some heterosexual female ear and by extension womb ought to be seduced by its rhythms and rhymes, if not its persuasive rhetoric or reason. If it is indeed "The ear of the other [which] says me to me and constitutes the autos of my autobiography" (Derrida, The Ear of the Other 51), then the disappearance in Cooley's theory not of the poet's ear but of the auditor's ear collapses his theory in its own terms. Moreover, the stakes for the male "ear" poet go beyond the lack of reception and dissemination of his words. If the ear of the Other is the organ which signifies one's self, it also by extension signifies gender and sexuality. As Derrida hypothesizes, "The sex of the addresser awaits its determination by or from the other. It is the other who will perhaps decide who I am--man or woman. Nor is this decided once and for all. It may go one way one time and another way another time. What is more, if there is a multitude of sexes (because there are perhaps more than two) which sign differently, then I will have to assume . . . this polysexuality" (52).

In remarking its absence, Cooley is not necessarily lamenting the lack of successful fertilization, however, and his vernacular muse, as we have seen, seems to promote "male bonding" more than any other kind of union. Despite his exuberance on behalf of playful, polymorphous postmodern representation, Cooley's position remains male, heterosexual and phallogocentric. Di Brandt has pointed to a few of the problems with Cooley's uncritical acceptance of what he takes to be neutral terms in a postmodern program for poetry. In a short essay called "Questions I Asked Dennis Cooley about The Vernacular Muse" (the title refers to the title of Brandt's own first book _Questions i asked my mother_, published by Turnstone Press), Brandt addresses him directly and personally:

> So "plagiarism," you say, didn't begin until after the Renaissance. Cooley, before that people got burned at the stake for stealing words or misusing

> them. (They still do some places. It's a hell of a copyright.) It's not like words "were openly available in a kind of verbal communism," at least not to be played with the way you want to do, to change the rules. Hell no. And it's not like they're there, even now, "freely," for the taking. . . .
>
> Isn't there a very crucial difference, Cooley, between "finding," "taking," "stealing," "appropriating," and "being given," "offered," "bestowed"? (Remember when women used to have to explain the difference between rape and mutual sex?) "Expropriation" is surely another form of silencing, if you think about it from the point of view of the expropriated. "Speaking from or for" amounts to very different processes if you're talking about language. Doesn't it? You gotta be careful when you're playing around with orality, since it so often, as you say, "belongs" to the already disenfranchised, marginalized people (Brandt 95).[17]

It would seem then that Cooley's exile of female poets from his vernacular republic culminates in a number of undesirable outcomes. The relation between speech and writing in poetic composition remains misread, distorted and untheorized. The "ear" poet finds himself outside the hearing (and the insemination) of a female interlocutor.

The exclusive reservation of the vernacular for men bars women poets from the mother tongue and fails even to listen for a vernacular of women.[18] The consolidation of a binary relation between just two organs of the body, with one, the ear, standing in from time to time for the phallus, reauthorizes traditional binary sexuality and at most only revives men's and women's phallogocentric bodies.

. . . . . .

Because translation, more so than representation, practices the difference between signifier and signified, it can open up poetic texts which incorporate both spoken and written models of composition. Texts such as *Seed Catalogue* which move back and forth between the oral storytelling of the prairie pub and the written seductions of an actual seed catalogue, for example, can be read as instances of composition by translation. So can the hubbub of sound, syllables and performance of a book such as *The Sad Phoenician*. The figures of borders and *doppelgängers* elaborated by Robert Lecker, the self-reflexivity and framing convincingly argued for by Frank Davey, and Dennis Cooley's remapping of the phallogocentric body, illuminative readings all three of them, are nonetheless symptoms of a failure to engage fully the dynamics of the collision on the page of a speech economy and a written economy. In the next three chapters I shall attempt to theorize a translation poetics on the basis of readings of selected texts by Robert Kroetsch.

2. The (Rosetta) stone hammer

> Historically, both Canadians and Americans have experienced the task of commencing a new literature in a mandarin language (Robert Kroetsch, "The Canadian Writer and the American Literary Tradition," The Lovely Treachery of Words 53).

Think of the stone hammer in "Stone Hammer Poem" as a kind of Rosetta stone. Picture the poet as archaeologist-translator trying, as Kroetsch describes Wah's undertaking in Pictograms from the Interior of B.C., to recover the lost connection, to read "the traces, trying to leap the gaps (signifier to signified), trying to un-name the silence back to name . . . . The poet as (inspired? shamanistic? mad?)/ archaeologist" ("For Play and Entrance," The Lovely Treachery of Words 122-23). In "Stone Hammer Poem" Kroetsch transforms the stone hammer into a type of Rosetta stone, a stone with the power to decipher and unlock the disparate pasts of several different peoples--natives, German immigrants and their progeny. Rather than locating proper names that will decode the stone that will in turn decode the text, however, Kroetsch un-names the name 'stone hammer' and continually calls into question the various 'propernesses' of the stone as an object in the world.

The moment it presents itself to the poet as a text to be deciphered and read, the physical properties of the stone hammer become uncertain:

This stone
become a hammer
of stone, this maul

is the colour
of bone (no,
bone is the colour
of this stone maul) (The Stone Hammer Poems 54).

The demonstrative and unequivocal "this stone" undergoes a process of transformation (or perhaps poetic manufacture) in the second line to become a hammer. Its change of state from stone to hammer and then in the third line to a hammer of stone, subsequently renamed as a maul and later as a stone hammer, is accomplished less by verb tense than by the mechanism of the line breaks. Along with these name changes, its colour[1] and other material properties are defined by negation, comparison and reversal of comparison, using the copula verb as a fulcrum around which these movements take place. Statement, qualification, renaming, comparison, reversal, association by means of internal rhyme, parentheses--all function to undetermine the nature of an object as apparently solid and unequivocal as a stone hammer. The cautiousness, concern for accuracy and modification of original impressions are those of an archaeologist compiling field notes. In George Bowering's words "Kroetsch is always erasing, I said. That is how he gets things done. . . . When he erases he doesnt replace, I said. You can see the old words. It's called a palimpsest by an archaeologist" ("Stone Hammer Narrative" 131). Not only is Kroetsch's method of erasure called a palimpsest by an archaeologist and not only does Kroetsch as archaeologist-poet find a palimpsest at his dig site; his very methods of excavating that site create a palimpsest. In terms of Kroetsch's work then, a palimpsest is more than a doubly inscribed text. A palimpsest can be located in other kinds of objects of utility as well, and it can even be created. In the process of the poet's excavation of it, the stone hammer becomes a palimpsest but not at the expense of losing its physical objecthood. The stone hammer becomes a palimpsest not through the poet's decipherment of it, but, paradoxically, through his recorded (i.e., textual) archaeological hesitations to read it as a text.

As property, another element of properness, the stone goes through many hands. "This paperweight on my desk" was "found in a wheatfield/lost." It "fell from the travois or/ a boy playing lost it in/ the prairie wool or/ a squaw left it in/ the brain of a buffalo or" (54-55). At each juncture of lost and found its name and 'proper' function alters. It becomes stone hammer and stone maul again. It also becomes a pemmican maul and a paperweight. Of course, ultimately the stone hammer also becomes a poem. As Bowering writes, "By erasing one gets back to the nothing of beginning, but not really, because the erasure is something, a history of the poem's making" (132).[2] This history of the poem's making, this erasure, becomes the poem. The stone hammer becomes a palimpsest through the poet's reluctance to decode it as such, and the poem becomes one by erasure of language.

Just as the stone changes ownership, so does the site at which it was found:

> Now the field is
> mine because
> I gave it
> (for a price)
>
> to a young man
> (with a growing son)
> who did not
>
> notice that the land
> did not belong
>
> to the Indian who
> gave it to the Queen
> (for a price) who
> gave it to the CPR
> (for a price) which . . . (57-58).

If the stone is a palimpsest, so too is its location: object, location of the object and the poem all take on aspects of a palimpsest. The stone has been shaped and imprinted by grammar, scientific and archaeological methods, ordinary perceptual modalities, habit, the other stone which chipped and hammered the hammer into its present contours, blood stains, rawhide loops, curses, and poetry. The land--marked by the retreating ice of the Ice Age, the buffalo, travois lines, the plow, blood, the growing of crops, wild plants such as saskatoon, chokecherry and cranberry bushes, barbwire fences, and the paperwork of numerous land transactions--is similarly textual. The palimpsest, then, becomes the lived world of which the stone hammer, a piece of Alberta land and the poet himself are a part. The beauty of Kroetsch's poem, however, is that each of the stone hammer, the site at which it was found and even the poem itself retains its physical properties and does not become merely absorbed by or subsumed by writing.

Questions of propriety, or properness of location, are raised with regard to the stone at the point at which its apparent physical utility is suspended:

> He kept it (the
> stone maul) on the railing
> of the back porch in
> a raspberry basket.
>
> I keep it
> on my desk
> (the stone) (59-60).

The raising of these questions of propriety, property and physical properties in the poem helps to guarantee the stone's stoniness.

If the Phoenicians moved writing off the sacred wall, down to the secular and commercial wharf, Kroetsch builds on their gesture by refusing to allow us simply to read through the (Rosetta) stone hammer to a transcendent text beyond. The poem instructs us, duplicitously: "translate" and "do not translate." Kroetsch's circumlocutory contra-diction insists that we must continue to read the stoniness of the stone, the fragment as fragment, even as we decode the poem, the past and the prairie. In his essay on the contemporary Canadian long poem Kroetsch ponders the resonances of the title of his own continuing poem,[3] which "Stone Hammer Poem" opens:

> Yes, it is as if we spend our lives finding clues, fragments, shards, leading or misleading details, chipped tablets written over in a forgotten language. Perhaps they are a counting of cattle, a measuring out of grain. Perhaps they are a praising of gods, a naming of the dead. We can't know (The Lovely Treachery of Words 129).

It is not that we have yet to discover the cartouche or proper names that will translate the fragments from nonsense into sense. The stone hammer both is and is not a Rosetta stone. It is an implement for the decipherment of ancient and contemporary texts. But unlike the Rosetta stone, it is not an official decree passed by a council of priests. Instead it is a tool for survival--as a technology for bringing down a buffalo, as a pemmican maul for preparing food, and as an occasional paperweight and translation device on the poet's desk.

"Stone Hammer Poem" becomes the prologue to Kroetsch's continuing poem, Completed Field Notes.[4] Thus the archaeological impulse of Completed Field Notes is prefaced by the double impulse to translate and not to translate. The temptation both to read through the discovered fragments to a signified meaning and to allow these same fragments to retain their nature as fragments, chipped tablets, stone hammers, stones, informs Kroetsch's entire continuing poem. Derrida elaborates on the relation between translation and continuance:

> A text lives only if it lives _on_ _[sur-vit]_, and it lives _on_ only if it is _at_ _once_ translatable _and_ untranslatable . . . . Totally translatable, it disappears as a text, as writing, as a body of language _[langue]_. Totally untranslatable, even within what is believed to be one language, it dies immediately. Thus triumphant translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living _on_, its life after life, its life after death ("Living On" 102-103).

The poet's placement of the stone hammer on his desk, thus removing it sufficiently from its nearly forgotten location in the raspberry basket on the back porch,[5] renders it untranslatable and therefore a text again. This act of replacement as a literal 'carrying across' from one people to another, from the native to the European, from the nomad to the farmer, from the farmer to the poet, and possibly, by extension, from the oral to the literate, is a 'translation' in itself.[6] The stone hammer, then, makes translation "within what is believed to be one language" possible. Therefore it lives on. As the prologue to Kroetsch's continuing poem, "Stone Hammer

Poem" functions as the translator-poet's preface. The short long poem that is "Stone Hammer Poem" is the translator's preface to the larger translation project of Completed Field Notes.

3. The archaeology of the alphabet in *The Sad Phoenician*

> Thus the Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages *working side by side*: the text of pleasure is a sanctioned Babel (Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 3-4).

> You can always try to translate (Jacques Derrida, "Passe-Partout," *The Truth in Painting* 5).

The Sad Phoenician is generated out of two mistakes. One was the lovely mistake of Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound exploring the possibilities of the Chinese written character as a medium for poetry and mistranslating it in several respects. The second is found in Robert Kroetsch's statement on the back cover of his book where he writes that "Fenollosa and Pound were mistaken when they praised the ideograph and returned us to the arrested image." This remark about the preceding mistake has to be read as a deliberately partial and restrictive mistake or 'misreading' of the effects of both Fenollosa's essay and Pound's poetry. On the one hand, Kroetsch confines the effects of their praise of the ideograph to the imagist movement as initiated by Pound and rapidly abandoned by him (though still important for hundreds of poets who are even now writing in the English language). On the other hand, he simultaneously invokes and uses the translative elements of both Fenollosa's "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" and Pound's *Cantos* as generative texts for *The Sad Phoenician*. In his poetry

Kroetsch searches for an answer to the question he formulated in his essay "The Continuing Poem" (now included under the title "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues") when he wrote: "Homer's *The Odyssey*, forever being translated into new versions of the poem. How to do that without changing languages" (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 8). How does the monolingual "silent poet" write a long poem? How, without abandoning the oral tradition, the vernacular or the vulgar tongue for high art, but without forsaking high art either, do you grow a poet, a lover, a garden, a poem? The answer he uncovers is to translate between the spoken and the written registers of a single language, between the oral storytelling of the pub and the hubbub of language made possible by black marks incised on a page.

The Sad Phoenician celebrates the process of translation from its very first page. The stylized letter 'a' which, following the front cover and title pages, announces the text's opening (although one could also genuinely argue that the book begins with its back cover blurb, thus suggesting the possibility of an oriental reading order for the occidental book) produces a facsimile of a letter in the Phoenician alphabet.[1] This lower-case 'a' with part of its bottom half missing functions as an instance and an emblem of graphological translation, a form of translation in which a source-language (SL) graphology is replaced by an equivalent target-language (TL) graphology (Catford 62). But this 'a,' caught in the very process of translation, retains its own visual and linguistic identity and does not imitate a letter in the Phoenician alphabet. The clue that imitation is not being practiced here is the fact that the Phoenician alphabet did not include vowels: it was actually a twenty-two character syllabary. Thus it is not mimetic representation but translation that is signalled at the beginning of The Sad Phoenician.

Translation is not mimetic, not a metaphor. As Jacques Derrida remarks, "Translation is neither an image nor a copy" ("Des Tours de Babel" 180). Paul de Man, in a useful article analyzing (he calls it 'translating') Walter Benjamin's essay on "The Task of the Translator," sets up a distinction between the translator and the poet which, while de Man relies on versions of the poet and the translator which have been surpassed or at least circumvented, clarifies the distinction between translation and mimesis. De Man writes:

> Of the differences between the situation of the translator and that of the poet, the first that comes to mind is that the poet has some relationship to meaning, to a statement that is not purely within the realm of language. That is the naiveté of the poet, that he has to say something, that he has to convey a

> meaning which does not necessarily relate to language. The relationship of the translator to the original is the relationship between language and language, wherein the problem of meaning or the desire to say something, the need to make a statement, is entirely absent. Translation is a relation from language to language, not a relation to an extralinguistic meaning that could be copied, paraphrased, or imitated. That is not the case for the poet; poetry is certainly not paraphrase, clarification, or interpretation, a copy in that sense; and that is already the first difference (81-82).

De Man, following Benjamin, suggests that translation resembles philosophy, literary criticism or theory, and history more than it does poetry because like these other derived or secondary processes translation is not mimetic: it does not resemble the original the way, for example, children resemble parents, nor is it an imitation, copy, paraphrase, or metaphor of the original (82-83). Philosophy, criticism, theory, history--like translation, all of these disciplines are intralinguistic: "they relate to what in the original belongs to language, and not to meaning as an extralinguistic correlate susceptible of paraphrase and imitation" (84).[2] Or, as de Man succinctly points out in an interview immediately following his article, "you could not possibly get from the translation back to an original" (97).

In The Sad Phoenician Kroetsch plays with and blurs these models of the translator and the poet. Instead of practicing the art of mimesis, Kroetsch practices a poetics of translation. The graphic stylization of the letter 'a' (which also opens the first "and" of the series) imposed by the absent portion of the letter presents the question, first, as to whether the letter is in the process of appearing or disappearing. Is the English letter 'a' composing itself out of the Phoenician and/or Greek alphabets? Or is it decomposing back toward the Phoenician? Is this composition as decomposition?[3] Or is the English alphabet being translated into or by another alphabet or another language which may or may not share the same alphabet?

These mobile, gesturing letters pose still further possibilities and enigmas. For example, is the written trace composed, or decomposed, by speech, by the voice, or by what Roland Barthes calls "the grain of the voice" (Pleasure of the Text 66-67), or by the laugh, the cry, the lie, or the, ha, snort?

> and even if it's true, that my women all have new lovers,
>   then laugh, go ahead
> but don't expect me to cry
> and believe you me, I have a few tricks up my sleeve myself ('a,' 9).

Is the letter generally in a state of flux with regard to the voice? Does the voice translate the letter in ways we have not attended to before? Will the composing or decomposing letter, moving toward origin or destination, source or target, reach such an end point? What or where is this destination? In its state of graphic composition/decomposition, is the English phonetic character being imbued with pictographic or ideographic residues?

In order to begin to address some of the questions emerging from Kroetsch's translation poetics we must look briefly at ways in which translation is imbricated with alphabetic or phonetic writing. Derrida, reading Rousseau, has this to say about phonetic writing and its relationship to the voice and to languages:

> The trader invents a system of graphic signs which in its principle is no longer attached to a particular language. This writing may in principle inscribe all languages in general. It gains in universality, it favors trade and makes communication "with other people who [speak] other languages" easier. But it is perfectly enslaved to language in general the moment it liberates itself from all particular languages. It is, in its principle, a universal phonetic writing. Its neutral transparence allows each language its proper form and its liberty. Alphabetic writing concerns itself only with pure

> representers. It is a system of signifiers where the signifieds are signifiers: phonemes. The circulation of signs is infinitely facilitated. Alphabetic writing is the mutest possible, for it does not speak any language immediately. But, alien to the voice, it is more faithful to it and represents it better (Of Grammatology 299-300).

Alphabetic or phonetic writing introduces a supplement into the structure of representation. Whereas pictography appears to mime the thing itself or the signified, phonetic writing uses, through sound analysis, signifiers that are in a sense nonsignifying. "Letters, which have no meaning by themselves, signify only the elementary phonic signifiers that make sense only when they are put together according to certain rules" (299). That is to say, phonetic writing bypasses mimesis and goes directly to a radical translative process whereby letters translate phonemes, and phonemes translate other phonemes. This is why phonetic writing can function as a medium for interlingual translation and for intersemiotic translation of the audible voice into visible forms and figures.[4]

The stylized white alphabet collected on the front cover and the title page of the first edition of The Sad Phoenician looks something like a Semitic alphabet, especially if it is somewhat estranged--when, for example, the book is turned upside down (another reorientation of the book as such) or held up to a mirror. To Smaro Kamboureli the new alphabet looks like "something between the classic Greek alphabet and the Latin alphabet" ("A Poem out of Love" 49). Through this graphic stylization the reader is reminded that in addition to the interlingual translatability of an alphabet, various alphabets themselves, such as the Phoenician and the Greek, have been acquired and developed by means of translation. Giovanni Garbini describes the development of the first Semitic (or Phoenician) alphabet as a translation from the Egyptian alphabet and gives an illustration of the process:

> The Egyptian "alphabet" was the point of departure . . . .
>
> The ideal would have been to find as many monoconsonantal Semitic words as the monoconsonantal signs in the Semitic alphabet, but since Semitic has very few monoconsonantal words, the difficulty was avoided by using only the first consonant of longer words (the acrostic principle). In Egyptian a quadrilateral indicated a house and had the phonetic value pr; in Semitic, "house" was bet, therefore the quadrilateral sign was adopted to express the corresponding Semitic word, but only in relation to the first consonant, i.e. b. Another example: in Egyptian a wavy line represented "water", nu and had

> a phonetic value n; in Semitic "water" is mem (maym); at this point the wavy line adopts the value m. This procedure was applied to all the consonants; as far as possible, Egyptian signs with the new Semitic phonetic value were used and examples were drawn--this is worthy of note--from the whole Egyptian graphic system rather than from the Egyptian "alphabet".
>
> Thus was born the first Semitic alphabet . . . but this Semitic translation of Egyptian signs could only have taken place in a Semitic region dominated by Egyptian culture such as Palestine (89-90).

Similarly the Greeks' appropriation from the Phoenician alphabet of consonantal signs which the Greeks themselves did not use, in order to express Greek vowels (the Phoenician language used vowels but their script did not reflect them), is a species of graphological translation. Even alphabets themselves are created by, and function as technologies for, translation.

Robert Kroetsch, the poet as former prairie farmboy, does not wish to imitate the Phoenicians' gesture and move writing down to the wharf, nor down to the lower forty either, nor does he wish only to appropriate the ledgers or the letters of the Phoenicians for his poetry. Instead Kroetsch wants to write right in the ledger (and the seed catalogue) itself. One way of writing in the book, of course, is to translate it. This is the complete cover note from The Sad Phoenician:

> It was the Phoenicians who moved writing from the temple, down to the wharf. Not, I'll make you a god; rather, I'll make you a deal.
>
> They wrote down the sound, not the picture. That was the astonishing thing. They wrote down the sound. They freed the reader from the wall.
>
> Fenollosa and Pound were mistaken when they praised the ideograph and returned us to the arrested image. The Phoenicians--they'd heard that one before. Hey, they said, the ship is leaving. Get that cargo sorted and counted, the destinations marked. They needed an alphabet they could learn fast, write fast, send anywhere.
>
> The poem as hubbub. Freed from picture, into the pattern and tumble of sound. Poetry as commotion: a condition of civil unrest. Now listen here.
>
> The poet, not as priest, but as lover.

"The poet, not as priest, but as lover," like the Phoenician trader and bookkeeper, needs a portable, flexible, translatable alphabet. In order for desire to continue to circulate through language, he, the poet as lover, needs a notation system in which the signifiers refer not to signifieds directly but rather to other signifiers in an apparently endless metonymic chain of deferral and delay. When the traders "wrote down the sound, not the picture," they not only "freed the reader from the wall." They also freed the poet from his priestliness and set the conditions for him to be lover and to be loved. Traders freeing themselves from "picture" also released poet and lover alike into "the pattern and tumble of sound" and desire. The sadness of the poet as the sad phoenician of love is precisely the sadness of desire--desire in and for another language.[5] Just a few sentences following his statement, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, about the problem of translating without changing languages, Kroetsch comments on the impulse behind the writing of Seed Catalogue. He says:

> The seed catalogue is a shared book in our society. We have few literary texts approaching that condition. I wanted to write a poetic equivalent to the 'speech' of a seed catalogue. The way we read the page and hear its implications. Spring. The plowing, the digging, of the garden. The mapping of the blank, cool earth. The exact placing of the explosive seed (The Lovely Treachery of Words 8).

To "write" a "poetic equivalent" to the "'speech'" of a seed catalogue is to translate that text without changing languages. Moreover, the act of translating from speech to writing and from writing to speech is equivalent to the translation that takes place between reading and planting. In other words, the desire for other languages is the desire to exceed the limits of the English language and its phonetic characters and transform one's body into a pictogrammic character, digging, plowing, mapping, trading, and loving in the world. The desire to translate is the desire to write in the literal book (ledger, seed catalogue, alphabet) not as a transgression, appropriation or revision of its contents, nor as a way of figuring out the world and conveying an extralinguistic meaning. The desire to translate, the desire for other languages, is the desire to figure one's way out into the world.[6] Into the garden, the marketplace, the pattern and tumble of the lover's bed. Other languages, after all, are the languages of Others.

Kroetsch discusses his attraction toward translations at several points in the conversations of Labyrinths of Voice. Asked by Shirley Neuman "If the Tower of Babel is very attractive to you, as a positive rather than as a negative mytheme, how do you feel about being monolingual?" (119), Kroetsch replies:

> I feel almost crippled. It is sobering to consider how many of the important critical insights have come from people who have more than one language. Steiner is an example--a native speaker of three languages. Multilingual critics have a sense of the conceptual

> multiplicities behind language. One nice thing that has happened to English is its own unravelling. I'm sure India is going to have a new version of English that will almost have to be translated.

Continuing this line of discussion, Neuman suggests that the act of writing language, as opposed to speaking it, unifies all language into the same language. Here is Kroetsch's response:

> Writing codifies but even so there is a breakdown coming. You can pick up two novels written in English right now and sense the enormous differences in their respective uses of English. Of course, I think that speech overrides much of that process of codification even today. That is why an oral tradition is so important (119).

In his replies to Neuman's questions, Kroetsch (not unlike de Man) explicitly connects translation with critical or theoretical insights about language, with the decomposition of a specific language, and with the relationship between speech and writing. In other sections of Labyrinths of Voice he connects translation both with the writer's act of 'misreading' the language--of making strange the familiar, ordinary language--and with the critical act of the reader exploring the text (151). He links the dream of Babel with an illusion of freedom associated with "falling out of cosmologies" and "becoming a fragment again" (25). He enthusiastically embraces Neuman's offer of translation as a "trope" for his concept of influence, because, he says, translation contains both metonymy and difference, adding that translation "is metonymy because it's another naming. We can give twenty names and only hope that the nameless thing has been recognized by that" (18). The myth of the Tower of Babel intrigues him, he admits, more and more: "I now think that it was a great thing, one of the greatest things that has happened to mankind. From the Tower of Babel all of a sudden, we gain all the languages we have" (116). In "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" Kroetsch even ventures to characterize the whole enterprise of Canadian writing as a middleground perilously situated between the inherited systems of source text and source language and the dispersal of the as-yet-unnamed fragment:

> Canadian writing takes place between the vastness of (closed) cosmologies and the fragments found in the (open) field of the archaeological site. It is a literature of dangerous middles. It is a literature that, compulsively seeking its own story . . . comes compulsively to a genealogy that refuses origin, to a genealogy that speaks instead, and anxiously, and with a generous reticence, the nightmare and the

> welcome dream of Babel (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 71).

What takes place in this middleground is graphological, phonological, intralingual, and intersemiotic translation. The archaeology of 'a' graphs Kroetsch's poetics as a poetics of archaeological decipherment.

. . . . . .

> I write because I do not want the words I find: by subtraction (Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* 40).
>
> The stereotype is that emplacement of discourse *where the body is missing,* where one is sure the body is not (*Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* 90).

A palimpsest of a genuine McKenzie's Seeds catalogue is visible at the surface of the page of the first edition of Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue*.[7] The poem is printed in green ink on Byronic Blue Brocade paper. Just below the surface of the poem, screened in light brown, are text and images reproduced from two catalogues released in 1916 and 1922 by McKenzie's Seeds of Brandon, Manitoba. The images, naturally, are of vegetables, flowers, fruit, grains, grasses, and gardening implements. The light brown text and images exist just at the threshold of legibility, and the reader has to strain to decipher them.

The sprightly green words of the poem, on the contrary, printed on the right-hand page only, ripple over the surface like new grass or an early crop.

In "The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" Kroetsch relates the compositional method that produced Seed Catalogue not to gardening, as might have been expected, but to archaeology. He writes:

> For me, one of those [archaelogical] deposits turned out to be an old seed catalogue. I found a 1917 catalogue in the Glenbow archives in 1975. I translated that seed catalogue into a poem called 'Seed Catalogue'. The archaeological discovery, if I might call it that, brought together for me the oral tradition and the dream of origins (The Lovely Treachery of Words 7).

Kroetsch sifts the site of origins, and what he discovers is not a buried city or a lost temple, not even dinosaur bones, broken bits of pottery, or a stone hammer. Kroetsch's archaeological method in this instance takes him instead to actual roots. And vegetables. He translates the word 'roots' literally, and this translation, to the letter, leads him to the written words of the found text, out of which he then translates the poem.

Kristjana Gunnars astutely connects roots, rootedness and hearing in Kroetsch's poetry when she observes: "Even when your mother says you've gotta wash your ears because you could grow cabbages there. This has everything to do with what you hear. The plants you have grown in the soil, where you are rooted, and also what you hear: grows in your ear" ("'Meditation on a Snowy Morning'" 61). The archaeologist-poet, then, not only reads the text of the discovered site; he translates it as well. In translating the written document, he rediscovers the spoken form of the language. The effect of this translation from archival document (ST) to long poem (TT) is to make us hear the written document. By translating from the archive to the long poem, Kroetsch "reoralizes"[8] the written text and makes us hear the archive once again.

In the process he also theorizes a new writing practice. "How do you grow a poet?" he asks. The parallel between the physical work of plotting, digging, sifting, mapping out, and seeding a garden in spring and conducting an archaelogical dig is obvious. Not as clear but equally important is the way in which the translation of the seed catalogue into its "poetic equivalent"[9] gives us or gives us back the seed catalogue as a shared text. That is, the poem does not simply take the seed catalogue as its point of origin. The translation of the seed catalogue allows us to hear its language anew[10] and to reconstitute ourselves beginning from the ear and flowing through our whole body, plowing, digging, placing the seed.[11]

E.D. Blodgett offers the term 'interdiscursive,' as differentiated from 'intertextual,' to describe "the kind of activity that draws the prose Kroetsch employs into the poetic text" (202). Blodgett argues that what he calls "the textualization of origin" in Kroetsch's poetry "prevents . . . the distinction between speech and writing that, as Derrida argues, has governed linguistic analysis since Plato at least" (200). Here is how Blodgett sees Kroetsch preventing the distinction between speech and writing: "If speech, the spoken word, contains presence, and writing continually loses sight of origin, to make origin the object of writing, by silencing the myth of the spoken word and capturing it in a game of signs, is to efface the distinction between prose and poetry. This, it seems to me, is precisely Kroetsch's enterprise, by using both a ledger and, in another book, a seed catalogue--both examples of prose at a zero grade--as matrices of origin" (200). The palimpsest of the seed catalogue in the book of that title, Blodgett contends, works to make visible and to problematize the traditional, hermeneutic notion of the book as such. He suggests that Kroetsch transfers both speech and writing into the other's economy.

It is not that Kroetsch prevents the distinction between the two economies. Rather, by translating between them and thereby layering speech and writing over one another he creates a palimpsest. With regard to _The Sad Phoenician_ Neuman characterizes the exchange between speech and writing in that book as the barter or trade that eventually leads to archaeology. As she describes the book:

> "At sea," the Phoenician is "a trad[er] in language," bartering speech for writing, writing for speech, and scattering the artifacts of that barter around the Mediterranean of the poem, leaving them to be found out of context, fragmented, transformed into other uses, all use lost. The poem becomes, to use a favorite Kroetsch metaphor, an archaeological site of language. The dig turns up allusions, puns, clichés. Puns proliferate, sometimes literary, sometimes colloquial, often morbid, intentionally bad, nearly always based on cliché ("Allow Self" 111).

In a 1976 entry in _The Crow Journals_, Kroetsch places the "text beneath the text" at the 'root' of Canadian writing:

> Terry & Caroline Heath and their three sons stayed with me last night. This morning, a fine discussion of Canadian writing. Terry insisting we have no tradition and must write out of that. My asserting against his statement a belief in the text beneath the text, an everlasting grope into the shape of that darkness. As with rural people, the complexities and patterns beneath the formulaic speech. Almost the

> opposite of urban, where the surface is sometimes more complicated than what lies beneath it. But the text beneath the text, as in Gone Indian, is at the root of our Canadian writing. The ur-novel that no ONE will ever write (53).

In The Sad Phoenician, as in Seed Catalogue, Kroetsch creates an archaeological site. He inscribes the text as palimpsest by translating speech into writing and writing into speech. Obviously, translating within a single language, he does not translate for referential meaning; he translates in order to preserve the differential features of speech and writing. As he says, "I think that when we record speech we have somehow to keep a great deal of that speech present. I feel that writing on the wall was often a denial of speech, while the page must offer a sense of speechness" (Kamboureli, "A Poem out of Love" 48).

The palimpsest in The Sad Phoenician is the rhetoric of the poem itself with its rubbed out, written over, over-written, disrupted, disintegrated fragments of oral discourse:

> but I gave her tat for tit
> and that reminds me, I owe myself a letter too, a gentle
> apology for sins of omission, ha, emission, well, let
> the chips fall
> but I was only joking when I suggested, we could go down
> together, hoo
> and a rose by any other name ('e,' 17).

A palimpsest, originally a manuscript which has been written on, erased and then written over again, is created at the surface of the text, in this case, by rubbed-out (figures of) speech. The poet as Sad Phoenician, the speaker in and of the poem, prunes popular expressions and cultural clichés ("a rose by any other name"), reverses their ordinary order ("tat for tit"), makes substitutions and emendations ("sins of omission, ha, emission"). The particular letter of the alphabet at which the poet is currently situated, 'e' in this case, along with the element of sexual play, dictates the emendation of a single letter which changes "omission" to "emission." He puns in the lines above on various meanings of the word "letter." A letter is 1) a written symbol or character representing a speech sound, and 2) a written or printed communication directed to an individual or organization. Both of these meanings are implicit in the phrase "I owe myself a letter too." In order to settle with himself the debt of a letter, he chooses not the letter 'o' (which perhaps reminds him of scenarios he would sooner forget or repress-- scenes of owing, debt, lack, absence, failure) but 'e,' so that he chooses "sins of emission" over sins of "omission."

A third definition of 'letter,' namely, the literal meaning of something, is what gets the Sad Phoenician to the word "letter" in the first place. That is, he takes his own reversed cliché "tat for tit" literally (moreover, literal and equivalent exchange is what the expression 'tit for tat' in its ordinary form connotes), and this reminds him that he owes himself a letter of apology for what may have been, controversially perhaps, either sexual failure or sexual prowess and promiscuity: "sins of omission, ha, emission." If he "gave her tat for tit," and somehow this revenge strategy reminds him that he owes himself a letter too, then it would follow that the "tat" he gave "for tit" must have been a letter or writing of some kind. Bundled together in these few lines, then, are sexual emissions, oral ejaculations, letters, and writing traded for sexual favours ("tat for tit"). Throughout the entire poem, of course, including earlier on the same page where he refers to his own "sterling insights into the pseudonymous works of poor dear Kierkegaard," as well as in the Silent Poet Sequence, yet another definition of "letter" as literary culture or learning, or literature as a discipline or profession, is in play. The penis as privileged signifier is also much in evidence throughout the entire long poem, and it often functions in Kroetsch's work as a kind of a letter.[12] In short, the letter, in several senses of the word, generates the poem.

Letters beget other letters. Kroetsch uses the arbitrary order of the alphabet to generate and structure his text. A crucial question which must be asked in this context is, if an alphabet "represents the phonological system at the rate, more or less, of one sign per phoneme" (Barber 49), then what is the ratio between the single composing/decomposing letter of the alphabet on the left-hand page and the profusion of language on the right-hand page? Clearly the economy of The Sad Phoenician is one alternating between insufficiency and excess. This vacillating economy must be taken into account, of course, if one is arguing that a translation is taking place in this text. How are we to explain this blatant violation of translation equivalence between the letter and the spoken word, between the disappearing letter and the volubility of speech?[13]

One way of resolving this problem is to recall that the English alphabet is not English at all but borrowed from Latin (which derived from Phoenician) and shared by many languages. As bpNichol explains in one of his articles on notation, "The 'Pata of Letter Feet, or, The English Written Character as a Medium for Poetry":

> Well really the alphabet is Phoenician eh? And of course the same one is used in French and Spanish and Portuguese and and and. So at a certain point when i bring my poems down to the level of the letter i also begin to move freely between languages, or between certain languages, or at least in a space where the particularity of my language is over-ridden by the particle clarity. . . . It is also true that at this

> level of things you are very in touch with the essential arbitrariness of signs (93).

This access at the level of the letter to other language systems is boosted, as I have argued, by means of Kroetsch's graphic estrangement of the English written character, to border on other writing systems which do not use exclusively phonetic characters. Thus, using the phonetic alphabet to generate his text, the poet as "a kind of Phoenician" "trading in language" (The Sad Phoenician 13) translates toward a picto-ideo-phonographic writing system (or mixed script[14]). Excavating and deciphering puns, homonyms, redundancies, and slippages, he performs a cryptanalysis of the English language.[15]

Cryptanalysis is defined as "The study of secret codes and ciphers with the object of decoding or deciphering them" (Barber 246). Rather than decoding or deciphering ancient fragments of texts or archival records into either standard or poetic English, however, Kroetsch's poetic cryptanalysis works to un-decode or un-decipher the formulas of both speech and writing, to de-create, as Neuman suggests, an archaeological site.[16] The source language he translates from is the rhetoric of ordinary figures of speech:

but frankly
and I don't think a little frankness would kill any of us,
     I had my peek into the abyss, my brush with the verities,
     such as they are, my astounding fall from innocence, you
     better believe it
but I'm all right, don't feel you should worry, the

> responsibility is mine, I can take care of myself
> and the next time you feel like deceiving someone, why not
> try yourself
> but I have my work to sustain me, my poetry, the satisfaction
> of a job well done . . . ('b' 11).

Using, in addition to the sequence of the alphabet, the translation machine of alternating 'ands' and 'buts' throughout the entire poem Kroetsch juxtaposes cliché after cliché almost without interruption, as in the above quotation. Abyss, brush, better believe it, responsibility, job--all of these words are brought to us by the propulsion of the letter 'b' and the voice whose moralizing, self-pitying, smug, complaining, vengeful rhetoric rants on throughout the poem.

Rehearsing a short history of rhetoric in his essay "Figures," Gérard Genette describes a rhetorical figure as "a gap in relation to usage, but a gap that is nevertheless part of usage; that is the paradox of rhetoric" (Genette 48). For Genette, this gap, this spacing, between the present signifier of the rhetorical figure and the virtual signifier which could have been used in its place (usually thought of as the 'meaning' of the figure) creates the texture of a palimpsest. Rhetorical form, he says, "is a surface, delimited by the two lines of the present signifier and the absent signifier" (49). He continues:

> That is why the treatises of rhetoric are collections of examples of figures followed by their translation

> into literal language: "The author means . . . . The author might have said . . . ." Every figure is translatable, and bears its translation, transparently visible, like a watermark, or a palimpsest, beneath its apparent text. Rhetoric is bound up with this duplicity of language (50; the ellipses are Genette's).

Genette also discusses the politics of the rhetorical figure. Explaining why the distinction between ordinary language and poetic language is an insufficient criterion for defining the figure, he notes that "the vulgar tongue also has its rhetoric, but rhetoric itself defines a literary usage which resembles a language (langue) rather than speech (parole)" (50). Conversely,

> Once it has emerged from the vivid speech of personal invention and entered the code of tradition, each figure has as its task merely to intimate in its own particular way the poetic quality of the discourse of which it is part. The "sail" of the classical ship has long since ceased to be the mark of a concrete vision; it has become, like Quevedo's "bloodstained moon" a pure emblem: a standard, above the troop of words and phrases, on which one may read not only "here, a ship," but also "here, poetry" (58).

The ultimate aim of rhetoric, according to Genette, is not to concern itself with the originality or novelty of figures, which are qualities of individual speech. "Its ultimate ideal would be to organize literary language as a second language within the first, in which the evidence of signs would assert itself with as much clarity as in the dialectal system of Greek poetry, in which the use of the Dorian mode signified _lyricism_ absolutely, that of the Attic mode _drama_, and that of the Ionian-Aeolian mode _epic_" (58). Genette concludes his essay by asserting that the rhetoric of modern literature is precisely a rejection of rhetoric: "What can be retained of the old rhetoric is not, therefore, its content, but its example, its form, its paradoxical idea of literature as an order based on the ambiguity of signs, on the tiny, but vertiginous space that opens up between two words having the same meaning, two meanings of the same word: two languages (_langages_) in the same language (_langage_)" (59).[17]

The rhetoric of _The Sad Phoenician_ suggests that Kroetsch simultaneously rejects, delights in, and delights in rejecting the rhetoric of common speech. After listing a series of examples of a central figure he calls "the x of x," a catachresis which he catalogues throughout Kroetsch's work, Ed Dyck concludes that "these are all extreme examples of the very figure of figurality in the Western poetic tradition" (Dyck 38). Dyck's point is that subtraction, like its opposite, abundance, is also a kind of style, and therefore a species of rhetoric. However, following Genette, if Kroetsch produces a rhetorical anti-rhetoric, he also employs these figures (even as he empties them of their content or meaning) to open up a space for two languages within the same language. For him, poetic composition is more than the writing down of a poem. The long poem is "A method, then, and then, and then, of composition; against the 'and then' of story" ("For Play," *The Lovely Treachery of Words* 120). That method of composition is translation. In *The Sad Phoenician* the poet is no longer the "translator, traitor" (Italian *traduttore-traditore*) invoked throughout the entire history of translation theory. He is the poet as translator/trader.

4. The rhetorical adventures of 'Don Juan' in The Sad Phoenician:

The rhetoric of performance / the performance of rhetoric

> If languages fail to meet, it is because they are *self-referential*, because they act--they affect the real--only by referring each to itself. What remains *untranslatable*, what is missed from one language to another and what the passage between languages is always condemned to miss, is thus precisely the *performative* functioning of a language, the way a language has of referring to itself and at the very same time of missing its own self-referentiality, by carrying its referring beyond itself toward reality (Shoshana Felman, *The Literary Speech Act* 92).

Robert Kroetsch, in an interview with Smaro Kamboureli about his long poem *The Sad Phoenician*, comments that Canadians "experience the sadness of arriving late" into the world, "and with that comes our recurring need to recover a beginning. You see, like the Americans we see ourselves as new people, but we don't believe what we see" ("A Poem *out of* Love" 49). The task of the Canadian writer is to translate us as readers into a vision of and belief in ourselves and, even more fundamentally and problematically, into our physical visibility to ourselves. In his essay "Unhiding the Hidden" Kroetsch clarifies what he sees as the position and responsibility of the Canadian writer in the face of the British and American traditions and the attendant invisibility to ourselves these powerful legacies have produced in Canadians:

At one time I considered it the task of the Canadian writer to give names to his [sic] experience, to be the namer. I now suspect that on the contrary, it is his task to un-name.

This necessity did not originate with Canadian writers. Heidegger says in his Poetry, Language, Thought: 'Roman thought takes over the Greek words without a corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word. The rootlessness of Western thought begins with this translation.'

The Canadian writer's particular predicament is that he works with a language, within a literature, that appears to be authentically his own, and not a borrowing. But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American.

. . . .

The Roman writer borrowed a Greek word into a Latin context. The Canadian writer borrows an English word into an English-language context, a French word into a French-language context. The process of rooting that borrowed word, that totally exact homonym, in authentic experience, is then, must

> be, a radical one (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 58-59).

To translate is, in Kroetsch's vocabulary, to 'unhide the hidden' or to 'uninvent' or 'decompose' the world (58-63). As we have seen, one of the solutions Kroetsch finds in order to root us in this place is, in writing *Seed Catalogue*, to translate the word 'roots' as the literal vegetables and flowers which grow here. When he was a young boy his mother told him to wash his ears. You could grow cabbages in those ears, she estimated. His mother's prediction, as mothers' words so often do, came true. Her son went on to translate a seed catalogue into a long poem because he wanted to write a poetic equivalent to the 'speech' of a seed catalogue. Now, post-*Seed Catalogue*, when we read the statement quoted above that the process of "rooting" the homonymic word in authenticity must be a "radical" one, even the word 'radical' moves toward its 'root' meaning because the radical process Kroetsch is referring to is one of translation.

The sadness of the Sad Phoenician of Love is a reflection of his desire for this authenticity of experience. It is also the sadness of desire in and for an Other and the Other's language. In the absence of a second language to translate his long poem out of or into, Kroetsch performs an intralingual translation, from English into English, translating between the spoken and the written registers of that single language. And, in several of his long poems but in The Sad Phoenician especially, the performance of rhetoric and the rhetoric of sexual performance translate one another. In this double translation, Kroetsch deconstructs both the rhetorical and the writerly as inherited primary models for poetic composition. This deconstruction pivots around the figures of the lovers in the poem, both the poet and the women. In what follows I will attempt to sketch the figure of the poet as Don Juanian lover and unfaithful translator.

The Sad Phoenician thematizes infidelity from its very first line. The book opens with a statement of infidelity: "and even if it's true, that my women all have new lovers" (9). With only the briefest hesitation, the voice informs us that ostensibly 'his' women have all been untrue to him and have run off with other lovers. That he expects responses of laughter and derision to this confession--"then laugh, go ahead/ but don't expect me to cry"--underscores the image of the male lover who is unable to control his female lovers' sexuality. However, the fact that the speaker describes the women as several and as a generic group under his possession, multiplying their apparent number with the word 'all,' suggests he may be something of a Don Juanian lover.

Questions of fidelity are raised in another register as well. The first phrase of the first line ("and even if it's true") simultaneously announces and retracts the truth of the statement that follows. Truth in love and truth in language exist on a par with one another from the very first line of the poem. After inviting the laughter of scorn and questioning the truth of his own statement that his women all have new lovers, however, the speaker demands that his words be believed ("believe you me"). What we are to believe, though, is that he has "a few tricks" up his sleeve. He is nothing, he says in the next line immediately following, if not honest. It is "true" that he'd "be off like a shot to see" the girl from Swift Current, "but the woman in Montreal is not so evasive, not so given/ to outright lies, deceptions." When she receives his letter, he predicts, she will confess her infidelity by admitting that "darling, I was following a fire truck/ and quite by accident found the divine, ha, flicker." Like the poet himself, she will readily confess her infidelities. "Virtue will out" (13) in the form of truthful statements, if not in sexual loyalty.

These linguistic fidelities and sexual infidelities--of tongue and letter and body--are staged on the facing page to that on which the decomposing letter 'a' is in the process of translating itself between English and Phoenician (or English and English). Drawing an analogy between the crisis of fidelity in marriage and in translation, Barbara Johnson describes how both linguistic and sexual infidelity depend upon a prior promise or contract. She remarks: "For while both translators and spouses were once bound by contracts to love, honor, and obey, and while both inevitably betray, the current questioning of the possibility and desirability of conscious mastery makes that contract seem deluded and exploitative from the start. But what are the alternatives? Is it possible simply to renounce the meaning of promises or the promise of meaning?" (Johnson 142-43). The Sad Phoenician's duplicitous way with truth and fidelity suggests that, despite their overt content, his rhetorical utterances may be less absorbed by questions of truth or falsity, even in 'his' women or in women as a class or group, than with promises and the act of promising itself. His promises nominate him as a type of Don Juan.

The words "but frankly" begin the section of the poem devoted to the letter 'b', as if the preceding stanza were something less than frank:

> but frankly
> and I don't think a little frankness would kill any of us,
> I had my peek into the abyss, my brush with the verities,
> such as they are, my astounding fall from innocence, you
> better believe it (11).

"Believe you me" has metamorphosed into "you better believe it" and at the end of this page "you bet you me," a movement from belief to betting but still within the rhetoric of promising. As Shoshana Felman remarks, "The act of seduction is above all an inducer of belief" (33).[1] Having just let us know by beginning this stanza with the words "but frankly" that he lied to us, or at least misrepresented the truth, in stanza 'a,' the speaker's overstated frankness, his confession, his brush with the verities and peek into the abyss seem just a little too close to his "astounding fall from innocence" to be wholly reliable. His desire to cast his lovers as the deceivers and himself as the deceived though not entirely innocent party (and therefore the one to be believed) and the mixture of promising with cursing ("she'll get her just reward") causes his promises of truth, honesty and trustworthiness to fail, though he continues to make them. His "peek into the abyss," we suspect, may not amount to much more than a peek into the brush, or the bush, or the abc's.

The act of promising, of course, is performative. In her book The Literary Speech Act: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages Shoshana Felman provides an overview of both Austin's and Emile Benveniste's work on the performative. As she reminds us, the very acts of promising, swearing, apologizing, and so forth produce their designated events. Therefore, "performative utterances, inasmuch as they produce actions, and constitute operations, cannot be logically true or false, but only successful or unsuccessful, 'felicitous' or 'infelicitous'" (16). The performative utterance, in other words, short-circuits notions of truth and fidelity. Self-referential, the performative speech act constitutes the real to which it refers (21). The promise, regardless of intentionality, inaugurates the real and bridges linguistic and material reality.

The Sad Phoenician who, in his very first line, first pluralizes women and then evacuates them from his attempted long poem, but who is determined nonetheless to write the long poem, sets himself up as a target for suspicion. The subject of his poem is not the morbid abjection of a great lost love but the mild revenge of the slighted and powerless lover who acknowledges his part in bringing on his own situation and who moreover openly enjoys the language of complaint. His rhetorical _tour de force_ of clichés, hyperbole, braggadocio, and false humility, on the current of which each of the women he imagines as his re-enters the poem, undercuts his repeated insistence upon truth, frankness and fidelity. In his incessant promising, his performance of rhetoric, he seeks the success or felicity he may (or may not) have sought in sexual and emotional relationships. Kamboureli correctly notes about the poem, "But his [the Sad Phoenician's] love for language overtakes the other aspects of love. I think that the way he talks about his different women is a sort of practice, a praxis almost, the trying out of language, in all its possibilities, rhetorical and others" ("A Poem out of Love" 50). Promising constancy in and of discourse, he attempts not only to be believed but to be beloved, to translate from linguistic to material reality.

But just as his fragmented and circumlocutory rhetoric undermines itself, so his catalogue of misfires, losses, and blown encounters testifies to the infelicities of sexual performance. For example, despite his contention with regard to the girl from Swift Current that he had been "the cause of/ her sweating, her shortness of breath" (9) and that she now "follows large flocks of birds, I hear, calling my/ name" (13), still she was the one who scorned his offer "of sex/ in a tree house" (9) and "moved in with that photographer from/ Saskatoon" (13). All of his women make rather audacious, if somewhat unconventional, claims to the autonomy of their own desires (running after doorknobs, following fires to firemen, refusing to become mere fantasy objects and pursuing their own fantasies instead). Therefore, if his trying out of many different possibilities of language is tied to his discourse on women, then the infelicities of sexual and rhetorical performance are seemingly inauspicious with regard to his project of translation.[2] It is significant that the speaker refers to himself as "a kind of Phoenician, with reference, that is,/ to my trading in language, even in, to stretch a point,/ ha, my being at sea" (13). Just as he names himself as trader, he also puns on the homonym of sea and 'c' and makes reference to the invention and theft of the alphabet, thus doubling his already double epithet of poet and lover to include as well translator and trader. The infelicities of performance, then, can be related to the infelicities, or failures and losses, of translation (and perhaps also to the debits and credits of trade). In other words, if the Sad Phoenician's desire is for an Other and her language, and both his rhetorical and sexual overtures are of no avail, then both his desires are frustrated and blocked. Translation and trading, writing and lovemaking, cannot take place.

Kroetsch uses clichés as a way of expanding upon and clarifying this notion of the failure of rhetorical and sexual performance and connects this failure with the act of translation. The Sad Phoenician is written almost entirely in the performative. Consultation of J.L. Austin's five categories of the performative (Felman 19) leads one to conclude that Kroetsch uses all five--verdicts, orders, commitments, behaviors, and expositions[3]--in The Sad Phoenician. As Felman shows, however, Emile Benveniste, refining and modifying Austin's categories, removes from the category of the performative all clichés, failures, and implicit and pervasive speech acts. "'Since they have fallen to the rank of simple formulae, they must be brought back to their original sense in order for them to regain their performative function,'" according to Benveniste (quoted in Felman 21). As I have argued in the previous chapter though, Kroetsch does not simply employ clichés in their exhausted form. He defamiliarizes them through using them in great abundance and juxtaposing them against one another, reversing their traditional order, breaking them off prematurely, interjecting with 'ha,' and so on. Thus he restores them to their performative function. Writing about autobiography in _Field Notes_ Shirley Neuman analyzes how Kroetsch's use of clichés paradoxically generates authenticity of language and self. Her detailed analysis of the section "The Silent Poet Eats his Words" is worth quoting at some length. She writes:

> The poems recreate the clichés in which _I_ gives voice to his loss, his self-pity, his sense of returning lost; doing so, they expose those clichés and allow the poems _as poems_ to become original and witty statements of a feeling which is in no way diminished or anaesthetized as it would be if the cliché were allowed to remain simply cliché. They effect that most difficult thing: they distinguish between genuine feeling and its inauthentic expression

> without denying the feeling. The poet IN the poem experiences death of language and Self, he "eats his own words"; the poet OF the poem triumphs by saying "I" dialectically. He is simultaneously both where he is, the site of the poem, and where he "might have been," the subject of the poem ("Allow Self" 114).

Neuman persuades us that "By synchronizing his two voices, his autobiography ceases to be an act of memory and becomes an act of speech, becomes an act of continuing self-enunciation" (115).

If the chapter of Kroetsch's autobiography staged in The Sad Phoenician is an act of speech, then it is a performative speech act, not a constative one. What renders it performative is the continuing bi-directional translation between speech and writing. The oral clichés barrage the reader and in their decomposition compose the poem. This composition as decomposition can only be accomplished through the technology of writing. The estrangement of the clichés made possible by writing them down and then, for example, erasing parts of these ordinary expressions causes their constative, common-sense truth values to be rendered performative and thereby diverted away from the criterion of constative truth or falsity to become instead successful or unsuccessful, felicitous or infelicitous. For the poet IN the poem, as for Don Juan (Felman 27), language is performative not informative. As for the poet OF the poem, Kroetsch says, confessing to a certain anxiety about himself when he is not writing, "I'm not a writer when I'm not writing" (Neuman and Wilson 160). For him, to write is not simply an intransitive verb; it is performative. Even the fact of having written loses its significance while the writer is not writing. "The author slowly erases himself by writing or at least you translate yourself out of that being into something entirely different" (Kroetsch, quoted from a previous interview, Neuman and Wilson 160). In the act of writing, the author, in the Foucauldian and Barthesian senses of that word,[4] erases himself into the writer, the scriptor, to use Barthes's terminology. And the writer translates himself by erasure out of "that being into something entirely different." He translates himself into various other (becoming and unbecoming) named personae--the Sad Phoenician, the Silent Poet, Mr. Ladderman, the anarchist who needed order--and into the persona which is unnamed but nevertheless acted out at the level of the poem's performative language, Don Juan.

At the letter 'h' ('h' for hero, himself, halo, Who?him, bird in the hand), the Sad Phoenician confesses to an inveterate infidelity: "and when the goat wears a halo, then I too shall be/ faithful, believe me; a man faithful, a woman satisfied" (23). Having begun this stanza with a skepticism (genuine or faked, it is impossible to ascertain) about the ability of a man to satisfy a woman, he concludes it on the same note, with a jab at the notion of the hero (and repeating his earlier pun on 'sea' and 'c') along the way:

> but there's no satisfying women, so why try the hero; yes,
> right, by all means, dead on: a quest for a woman who
> might be satisfied, the holy grail nothing, poor old
> Who?him gets it into his brief case, he puts out to sea,
> so to speak, for himself (23).

"But there's no satisfying women, so why try" is a rhetorical question if ever there was one. But if he at least temporarily evacuates woman as the beloved from his long poem by acknowledging his several lovers' new lovers, the poet also purges the poem of pretensions to the heroic. In this poem the hero puts out to sea/c so to speak for himself (if one reads that last line eliding the comma). In Kroetsch's long poem the poet/ lover/ translator/ trader sets out to sea/c in order to speak (and write) for himself rather than in a borrowed language.[5] He refuses fidelity to a language which, like the women in the poem, is both his and not his.

However, although he mocks the idea of a woman satisfied, and though his stated mission is to speak for himself, his rhetorical query "so why try" suggests that (along with temptations toward the heroic) he does not entirely renounce this traditional aspect of the epic quest either. Kamboureli postulates that "After reading the poem many times I decided that it's not about love.

It's about sex and about the erotic, and the Sad Phoenician is sad because he doesn't want to, or cannot, love. . . . But his love for language overtakes the other aspects of love" (49-50). As the suggestive title indicates, Kroetsch's essay "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" draws a direct analogy between the drama of lovemaking and the writing of the contemporary Canadian long poem:

> In love-making, in writing the long poem--delay is both--delay is both technique and content. Narrative has an elaborate grammar of delay. The poets of the twentieth century, in moving away from narrative, abandoned (some willingly, some reluctantly) their inherited grammar. Poets, like lovers, were driven back to the moment of creation; the question, then: not how to end, but how to begin. Not the quest for ending, but the dwelling at and in the beginning itself (The Lovely Treachery of Words 117-18).

I have already suggested that the desire of the Sad Phoenician is the desire for an Other and for another language. As Shoshana Felman makes clear, these same desires are shared with Don Juan:

> The desire of a Don Juan is thus at once desire for desire and desire for language; a desire that desires itself and that desires its own language. Speech is the true realm of eroticism, and not simply

> a means of access to this realm. To seduce is to produce language that enjoys, language that takes pleasure in having "no more to say." To seduce is thus to prolong, within desiring speech, the pleasure-taking performance of the very production of that speech.
>
> . . . The question of man's [sic] eroticism is raised, through the Don Juan myth, as the question of the relation of the erotic and the linguistic on the stage of the speaking body . . . (Felman 28-29).

Even if it is true, that his women all have new lovers, and if there is no satisfying women, so why try, then who, we might ask, is the Sad Phoenician trying to seduce in his poem? If the girl from Swift Current, the woman who follows fires to firemen, she who lives in a submarine, she who runs after doorknobs, etc. are all past history, then to whom is the poem directed? Is the poem the letter the poet threatens periodically to send to his various lovers? If "To seduce is to produce felicitous language" (Felman 28), then are the women in the poem essential only to generate linguistic felicity, as Kamboureli proposes? Is the paradoxical authenticity of the performative cliché seductive? Is "I love you" (The Sad Phoenician 35) a cliché too? Are these clichés examples of "language that enjoys, language that takes pleasure in having 'no more to say?'" Can the desire for felicitous language itself write the poem, or is an Other, one woman or several, needed?

. . . . . .

We can begin to address some of these questions by analyzing the relation between the picto-ideo-phonographic and the translative and performative elements of the language of The Sad Phoenician. As Kamboureli provocatively notes, "But you say 'Now listen here' on the back cover of the book, yet when the reader opens the book his [sic] eye is captured by the letters the printer designed" ("A Poem out of Love" 49). In his responses to Kamboureli's observation, Kroetsch's antipathy toward the ideogram, apparent in his cover note, is extended to the pictogram as well. His answer to her question about the arrest of the eye by the letters of the book is as follows: "It's captured by the alphabet, not by the objects that the alphabet used to represent" (49). Referring to the point where the Sad Phoenician recounts an old version of the making of the alphabet (the section on the letter 'w'), Kroetsch says "He goes back to where they drew pictures and then he frees himself from the pictures" (49). Kroetsch confesses that he himself rejoices in the arbitrary order of the alphabet (48). However, it must be said that his 'misreading' of

Fenollosa's and Pound's 'misreading' of the Chinese ideogram is a creative one. That is, his resistance to the arrested image is a resistance to a form of writing which promotes the image at the expense of robbing speech of its texture and exuberance. Kroetsch's concern about this kind of writing is very precisely a concern with its tendency to replace what he calls the "speechness" ("A Poem _out of_ Love" 48) of speech. His creative 'misreading' of the pictogram and ideogram in the cover statement of _The Sad Phoenician_ is a kind of cryptic, mini-manifesto in reply, on the one hand, to Fenollosa and Pound and, on the other, to the influential American Imagist tradition which followed upon Pound's brief engagement with that verse program. Kroetsch sets up his rejoicing in the arbitrary system of the alphabet as incompatible with the referential illusion sponsored, according to him, by the ideogram and the pictogram. Out of this resistance and rejoicing emerges the Sad Phoenician, speaking for himself.

The pictogrammic character is commonly thought of as a pictorial representation of a physical object or event. This is the sense in which Kroetsch refers to it. However, this understanding of the pictogram may be less valid than it might appear. The version of the pictogram as a picture of some thing rather than a picture of a sound, a sign for an object rather than a sign for a phoneme, assumes firstly, and erroneously, that objects have a physical body but sound does not. It is thought that objects have material reality but that sound is pure, disembodied, arbitrary, not linked irrevocably to the real. But sound is audibly, physically embodied in the world and in our ears. The sounds of language are more than the categories to which linguists have assigned them. Sounds have as much or as little reality as objects have. Such a view also assumes that, unlike phonograms, pictograms are completely silent, that they carry no association whatsoever with sound.[6]

In addition, this version of pictogrammic writing takes it as a given that a one-to-one correspondence between graph and object exists in the pictogram. It is obvious whenever one makes even a cursory attempt to decode a pictogrammic site that a one-to-one relation between object and sign is extraordinarily difficult to make, even allowing for the fact that one is attempting to decipher another signifying system.[7] To impose a ratio of one sign/one object is to impose the alphabetic ratio upon a pictogrammic writing system. Pictograms may well be referential, but they might not be referential according to the same mathematics as alphabetic writing. It is likely that our concept of referentiality is so thoroughly imbued with alphabetic consciousness that it is extremely difficult to conceive of reference in terms not governed by alphabetic writing. We must ask which form of writing has the propensity to obliterate the 'speechness' of speech--pictogrammic, ideogrammic or phonogrammic? Derrida's often-cited example is of Chinese picto-ideo-phonographic writing, which does not reduce the voice to itself. To criticize referentiality by singling out these other writing systems, as Kroetsch does, is unreasonable and unfair when it is cultures based not on the pictogram or the ideogram but the phonogram which have supported and thrived on the referential illusion.

These remarks are intended to open up to reconsideration the nature and relation of pictogrammic and ideogrammic writing to phonogrammic writing and to the alphabetic palimpsest of The Sad Phoenician. Since the performative is "at once a linguistic manifestation and a real fact" (Felman 21), one way of examining the relation between linguistic and material reality among the various writing systems might be to look at the performative aspects of each. The problem of how to relate the pictogram to the performative, though, is extremely complex. The pictogram is often categorized, but its serious and thorough analysis is largely neglected. And the performative, at least to my understanding, is a phenomenon theorized on the basis of alphabetic systems, though perhaps not exclusively so.[8] If one of the defining characteristics of the performative is that the act is identical to the utterance of the act ('I promise' promises), then how do we accommodate the special, linguistic sense of the word 'utterance' to speech acts performed within a non-phonographic economy? That is, if within the phonographic system of writing, audible speech is conceived of as subsuming the silence of writing, if this fundamental division and hierarchy between speech and writing is the premise upon which actions in the world are differentiated from (non-performative) speech acts, and if speech acts are believed to be less real than other physical acts but more real than writing (which is believed to be a mere transcript of the real), then the theory of the performative is a theory of what constitutes the real solely within a phonographic economy. In other words, to suggest that 'I promise' promises proposes identity between some consistent interior, intentional core of the self and its present and future acts. It also posits referentiality between a single, isolated speech act and acts in the external world. In other words, it accords the status of a written contract to a particular class of speech acts. The real is determined a priori by the constitution of the logocentric self.

Moreover, if subjectivity is defined as a function of speech acts, if 'I' is a floating signifier dependent upon the instance of discourse, then we must ask whether subjectivity differs in systems where speaking subjects do not identify themselves and their bodies with a phonically reproduced and shifting pronoun and furthermore where subjects do not identify themselves, even unconsciously, with a graphic sign representing a sound.[9]

Insofar as writing is itself a physical act, whether one writes with pen, computer, chalk, charcoal, a feather, stick, or some other apparatus, all writing is a performance. Never to have known a writer of pictograms is not sufficient cause to assume that the chiseller or painter or story-knifer of pictograms is only an author and not a writer or only a hunter, warrior or gatherer and not a scriptor.[10] A mark on paper, papyrus, vellum, clay, buffalo hides, or stone performs writing. At once a physical and a signifying activity, writing, like certain types of speech act, is performative. Broadly interpreted as the general making of signs rather than as a signifier's representation of a single signified, writing is performative. It cannot be determined whether the narrative traced by a group of pictograms is any more referential to the real than a short story or poem written in the Phoenician, Roman or English alphabet. Therefore, we cannot assume that fictionality and arbitrariness is a quality inherent only to our own culture and writing systems.

This is not to argue that the pictogram either is or is not performative but rather that in its performative aspects the alphabetic sign is opened up to other systems of writing such as the pictogram and ideogram. Just as a language like Chinese has six classes of character, including pictograms, ideograms and phonograms, so the English language can be manipulated to exceed its own phonetic economy, especially when explored in relation to other writing systems. The performative aspects of the speech of The Sad Phoenician approach the practices of other writing systems. Similarly, the letters of the phonogrammic alphabet decomposing on the left-hand pages of Kroetsch's long poem can be viewed as gesturing toward these other alphabets with the metonymic desire that language has for itself. As Jean Baudrillard muses, "Perhaps the signs want to be seduced, perhaps they desire, more profoundly than men [sic], to seduce and be seduced" (103). The performative, then, can be said to translate between the linguistic and the real, between the utterance and the act, and between different signifying systems.

. . . . . .

> I suppose I have to say something about my own life. I grew up on a big farm, and there was a high definition of male and female activity, and lots of hired help working. I had allergies so that I couldn't do a lot of the male work in buildings--but I could work out of doors. . . . But I couldn't work in the house either because that was the sphere of female activity--and I was the only son and the oldest, and all those privileged things. And the one place where I found a kind of open field was the garden because a garden is ambiguous on a farm. It involves women's work but often the men help. And so I ended up with a huge garden. . . . All this has to do with my wrestling with this notion of erotics right now in my writing. I had gone beyond mere role into a kind of human-sexual intertextuality (Robert Kroetsch, in Neuman and Wilson 21).

Shirley Neuman argues in her article "Figuring the Reader, Figuring the Self in Field Notes: 'Double or noting'" that notation is, among other things, "the voice of the poet / of the reader in the poem" (179). Neuman sets up her complex and exhaustive treatment of notation in Kroetsch's continuing poem with the following passage:

> 'Notation, in Field Notes,' Kroetsch responds [to bpNichol's question "What is notation?"], 'is the reader in the text': the figure of the Dear Reader encoded in the 'you' the poem addresses, yes, but also, and more, in figures (tropes, the patterns of the dance, spatial configurations on the page, signs) by which the reader maps her (no-longer-sacred) way through the poem. In 'The Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof' we have a reader of signs (the poet) within the poem who teaches us to read the signs of the poem. Some of these signs are a series of images for the troping,

> shaping, reckoning, thinking activity by which poet and reader figure in the complicity of writing the poem (177).

Neuman's description of the reader and the poet co-signing, co-inhabiting and co-creating the poem, mapping their way through it, casts poet and reader alike as "figures" within the text. Rhetorical tropes exist in the text on equal terms with spatial directives, dance patterns, signs imitating augury or divination, and doppelgängers. These figures of reader and poet are not the traditional subjects of alphabetic writing. This poet and this Dear Reader are not familiar logocentric selves.

Notation is a term which strategically avoids the familiar distinction between speech and alphabetic writing, incorporating as it does many different signifying ways and means. It would be convenient to think of notation simply as written marks dictating or shaping the reading of the words and meaning of a poem. However, if notation is "writing in order to write" (Neuman 177), then it is not writing in order to read only. It is writing in order to. And writing in order. And writing in order for another to be able to write. The term 'notation' does not discriminate between the black marks in the text which are words and those which are typographical marks. Even silence and the blankness of the page are notation (181). Thus Neuman's use of 'notation,' like my term 'translation,' functions to unconceal within the text a cornucopia of pictogrammic, ideogrammic, phonogrammic, and determinative signs and simultaneously to theorize the radical subjectivity inaugurated by such textual production.

Throughout "Figuring the Reader, Figuring the Self in Field Notes" Neuman assumes the persona of the Dear Reader in the text as a means of investigating what notation is and how it functions within Kroetsch's poetry. Arguing that "Field Notes refuses the Dear Reader her traditionally silent role as the passive consciousness acted on by the narrative" (177), Neuman configures the notation of the poem as the active traces of the writer and the reader in the text. In assuming the textual subjectivity of the Dear Reader, however, Neuman neither effaces her gender (since gender too is a textual construction, an effect of inscription and decoding) nor emphatically foregrounds it either. She analyzes the roles of both reader and poet in jointly creating the poem but focusses primarily upon depicting the traditionally overlooked Dear Reader's participation in the text.[11] She writes:

> As the 'you' of 'The Sad Phoenician' and 'The Silent Poet Sequence' against whom the longing poet's words fall silent, she speaks the last word. 'Letters to Salonika' demand, implore, that she call, write, that

> she abolish absence by the presence of (her) words. In 'The Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof' the named reader, Barrie (Nichol), has provoked the poem by asking, 'What is notation?' (177).

Neuman states that Kroetsch's texts assign the reader not only the last word but also the words which provoke the poem in the first place and many words in between.

Her inclusion of bpNichol in the figure of the Dear Reader, along with her inclusion, later in the article, of herself along with Kroetsch in the masculine pronoun, does not serve to 'universalize' or undo Neuman's gendering of the Dear Reader. Instead these strategies serve both to underline gender as a textual and discursive effect and to unsettle its usual binary determination. Talking about the double in the poem and the double of the poem, Neuman writes "The double--or notation--confronts us with ourselves, at the same time that he displays traces of difference from ourselves--he is slightly shorter, slightly younger, he wears a hat and we never do (though we tried, the day before we met him, to buy ourselves one)" (180). Using the second-person plural pronoun, she adopts Kroetsch's double as her own, or rather she positions herself as reader as the poet's double just like the man in "The Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof" who directed the poet to the correct train. In doubling Kroetsch's double she announces herself not as some androgynous figure of the reader but as a shorter, younger, hatless, differently gendered double of the poet. Thus she notates the possibility for the double to be of a different gender from oneself. If, as she says, "the meeting with the doppelgänger is notation for the discovery of the poem by the poet and reader" (179), then the encounter of the poet, within the Dear Reader's text, with the double of a different gender reinscribes the poem on the page as "only the notation of the poem; it takes flight into the future and aim at the reader, finding in her, connecting with, the lost poem found in her reading" (180). Neuman's strategic insertion of gender also effectively installs the poet as his own double. That is, her writing as reader writes the poet also as reader of his own text, as well as hers.

Near the end of part 2 of her article, reading "The Criminal Intensities of Love as Paradise," Neuman, writing about the figures of the lovers in that poem, asks "Where does the fulfillment of the lovers, of the poem, lie?" Her answer is "If desire enters the poem in its writing, its fulfillment (temporary and many times repeated) enters with the Other in her reading." "[T]he space opened up by writing itself" "is also the space in which desire enters, for desire is the definition of the Other as the site of what signifies, made corporeal, in Kroetsch's poems, in the doubling of their typographical presentation." In the white space, the silent center of the page, reader and poet encounter the border between language as system and language as subversive of that system (183) and perform a kind of lovers' leap across the gap.

Neuman equates the fulfillment of the lovers in the poem with the fulfillment of the poem itself, and further equates the fulfillment of the act of writing the poem with the reading of it by the Dear Reader. The Dear Reader, therefore, doubles herself as a lover in the poem. Moreover, reading and writing become analogous to lovemaking. More accurately, the activities of reading, writing and lovemaking enjoy a reciprocity. Gender is a textual effect inscribed on the body by sociopolitical, geographical, legal, educational, medical, and other forces and institutions. Because gender is a textual effect, and because gender cannot be inscribed or thought separately from the body, this version of gender as a kind of notation can now be used to import the body's difference differently into textual life. The differences we can now perceive through feminist and poststructuralist analyses of gender can be used to theorize, first, the ways in which difference is a structure of the composition of the body and, second, alternate ways in which bodies can be inscribed in texts.

Therefore, if difference is a structure of the body's composition, then orgasm is not the resolution of two differences into one but rather, as Neuman suggests, "the moment of conjunction that is intermittent (and repeatable), that contains within it its two solitudes, that is the play of differences" (183). When Kroetsch proposes in his essay "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" that "In love-making, in writing the long poem--delay is both--delay is both technique and content" (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 117), lovemaking is more than a metaphor or analogy for the structure or construction of texts. Making love literally inscribes the Other's difference, and our own difference from ourselves, on our bodies. The composure of the body after making love is the bliss not of union but of having played in the play of differences. Lovemaking *is* composition.

So, as Neuman's extensive though, she says, not exhaustive catalogue of different types of notational systems Kroetsch uses (181) might suggest, this plurality of notation is itself notation for the plurality of responses of poet and reader to one another within the text. As she concludes:

> To resist Meaning in pursuit of the play of 'meanings,' as Kroetsch does, is to demand an ongoing response, to insist on speech with an other as against the solipsism of the self. Nor is the Other conceived of by Kroetsch that ancient repository of

> Immanence, to be acted on by the (male) voice of authority, or as an embodiment of all that is alien (and therefore experienced as destructive) to Man. In her response (instead of her passive reception), as reader in the text (instead of reader of the text), she realizes the poem, acts to bring it into being (193).[12]

The dialogic relation, with erotic overtones, between differently embodied subjects which acts ~~to~~ realize the poem, is the poem. Yet the poem, like the poet, is not simply identical with itself either. The poem is only the double of the poem (180). At the conclusion of her article, Neuman passes the appellation of Dear Reader on to a prospective Other Dear Reader and, entering gamely into the spirit of Kroetsch's playful texts and into that of reader-response practice, she launches a challenge: "Your move, Dear Reader. Double or nothing" (193). The abdication of the author's traditional authority over the poem opens up exponential opportunities for the reader to assume a more active role in collaborating with her or his double, the poet, in engendering a multiplicity of signs at the site of the poem.

If poet, lover and reader notate the poem and/as their own traces in it, then, what kinds of 'figures' are the lovers in The Sad Phoenician? The women in that text provoke the poet's discourse. They instigate its performative rhetoric. Since reading is the performative enactment of the text's signs by a reader who is herself a sign within the text, what is the relation between the reader and the (other) women in the text? What is the status within the text of the lover (formerly the muse figure) who instills language in the Other-who-writes? Are the women in the text mere notation for the Other? Are they tropes for women in general? Do they simply notate the ear of the Other? Do they, like the poet and the Dear Reader, slip in and out of the text? Do they demarcate inside and outside of the text? Is their frenetically mobile activity the result of their desire to escape the text? Do they wish to write the narratives of their own texts or to locate the border between life and text? Or do they obfuscate the text's frame? Are they the phonogrammic equivalent of ideogrammic or iconic figures in the text? What is their relationship to the letters of the alphabet?

The women, marked in the text according to their curious desires, are inscribed iconically: the woman who lives in a submarine, the woman who developed a thing for adverbs, etc. The poet as Don Juan may be constructing an alphabet (or catalogue) composed of women and their erotic enthusiasms. It is worth noting, for instance, that it is at the letter 'w' that the poet recounts an old version of the making of the alphabet. 'W,' of course, also stands for 'woman.' At the letter 'e' he proposes that some woman, probably the woman from Nanaimo, "shall henceforth be referred to/ as A; right eh/ and henceforth, everlastingly, A she shall be" (17). Later he says of her that "X marks the known, the spot where she was/ but isn't" (19). The woman from Montreal becomes Ms. R (19). Ms. R becomes Miss Reading (39). The "cheeky ass umbrella" of the woman from Swift Current is the shape of the letter 'm,' at which letter this part of her anatomy is remembered.

The figures of the women in the text, the letters of the alphabet and the rhetorical figures of speech circulate reciprocally as signs in the text. The materiality of the women's bodies, the body of language and the performative realization of the rhetoric of Kroetsch's text cross and recross one another. As Paul de Man writes, "Considered as a persuasion, rhetoric is performative, but when considered as a system of tropes, it deconstructs its own performance. Rhetoric is a text in that it allows for two incompatible, mutually self-destructive points of view" (quoted in Felman, Writing and Madness 25). Thus the women in The Sad Phoenician are both necessary and superfluous to the text. They are a necessary element insofar as their figures draw out the poet's performance of rhetoric in the rhetoric of performance. However, given that rhetoric contains within it its own deconstruction, they are extraneous to the deconstruction enacted within the text. As Felman outlines, "Rhetoric is not, therefore, a system of transformations governed by a single generative model (a system of deviations controlled by the consistency of a code), but rather the subversion of one logical model by another one entirely foreign to it; rhetoric has to do with the discontinuity, the interference between two codes, between two or more totally heterogeneous systems" (Writing and Madness 26). Felman suggests that within a single language there are other languages, other systems, operating. The interference which results from the clash of two different languages within a single language, one which performs the real and another which does not, or does not yet, inscribes a kind of interlanguage. Within this rethinking of rhetoric, the rhetorical figure "constitutes precisely the very movement of inadequation, and the very work of difference" (26).

The problematical issue with regard to the role of the figures of the women in the text, as we have seen, centers around their gender and sexuality, their difference. If they function as the impetus for the poet's rhetoric of performance / performance of rhetoric, then their own status within reading, writing, representation, and the real must be examined. In her book Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of

Identity Judith Butler depicts gender as not only inscriptive but performative. According to her analysis, gender, like all performative acts, can be neither true nor false. Gender norms are performative accomplishments "which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief" (141). "In other words," she writes,

> acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (136).

One of the consequences of conceiving of the gendered body as performative is the realization that "it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (Butler 136). If the gendered body does not have ontological status, then it follows that neither does the concept of monological identity. Gender in this view does not support the construction of the dualist, binarist, phallogocentric self. Rather, the performance of gender deconstructs identity as such.

Thus it is that the rhetoric of Kroetsch's thoroughly heterosexual, even apparently heterosexist, text--a text in which, for example, the possibility of satisfying women is decried and men's infidelity is taken as a given (The Sad Phoenician 23)--deconstructs identity. In interview with Kristjana Gunnars, Kroetsch confesses that "Geography was very much a part of my identity as a child. I grew up with a very powerful sense that self was physical place" (59). For him, rhetoric is not the identification and application of topoi. It is the means to abundance "Of emotion; of the kinds of people one is as the speaker of a poem. That notion of many kinds of people speaking through your poems. You don't have to try to be consistent. That kind of abundance. The sense that you can repeat yourself; explore things by taking another shot at it" (54). The problem for him as a Canadian writer is to be able to gain access to his own unique senses of identity and place and the connections between them in a language overdetermined by cultural inheritances both his and not his. Hence he is faced with the necessity of locating himself through rhetorical circumlocutions, of deconstructing identity through the performance of gender, of writing the poem only by refusing to authorize it, of composing by decomposition.

Now we can begin to understand more fully both why the Sad Phoenician is the Sad Phoenician of Love and why he is sad. The sadness of the Sad Phoenician of Love derives not only from the personal facts that his women all have new lovers and that as a poet he has not attained the recognition he deserves. His sadness is a poet's sadness. David A. White describes Heidegger's sense of a poet's sadness:

> Renunciation as a word names the domain in which ontological relations occur between poet as speaker and entities as spoken about, ultimately entities tranformed into things through the agency of language. . . .
>
> Renunciation names the domain in which the poet experiences the awesome power of the word. . . . Sadness is similar to renunciation in that its ontological sense involves both the name for a distinctive psychological state and the connection between the name and the word as an indicator of the ontological dimension. Thus, the sadness experienced by the poet is neither mere dejection nor melancholy but is sadness resulting from the realization of the necessity of renunciation.

In the first book of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth observes that

> The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
> Hath, like the lover, his unruly times . . . .

For Heidegger, these "unruly times" are not durations of experience which could be avoided or mitigated if only the poet had greater self-control or if the

> situation were otherwise. They are essential in an ontological sense; that is, they describe the condition through which poetized language is possible as language. The poet is not sad as a prelude to the toil of creating his poem or is not sad in retrospect, gazing abjectly upon its poorness in light of hopes for what it could have been. Sadness is a type of feeling, but feeling must not be reduced to a purely subjective reaction without ontological import simply because of its immediately private nature (White 81-82).

The sadness of the Sad Phoenician, then, is not of a purely private nature but points rather to the ontological relation between word and thing, language and subjectivity, and between self and Other. However, if the problematization of gender reveals identity to be without ontological status, and if the release from traditional notions of identity is a cause for rejoicing on the part of the poet, then surely the Sad Phoenician's sadness is also a form of gladness. Indeed the abundance of language within the poem is a marker of celebration and joy, despite the rhetoric of complaint, neglect and bravado. Although a poet's sadness derives from the ontological separation between word and thing, nevertheless it is this very separation which makes possible the kind of writing of self that, paradoxically, frees him from self. As

Kroetsch says, "You write the poem with your life by not creating a safe boundary between poetry and life. It would be nice if there sometimes were a clear boundary, but in fact the two keep spilling back and forth; exchanging. And it's not just from life into art. Art does things to our lives too. You write a poem and then it backfires on you and alters your life" (Gunnars, "'Meditation'" 67). In Kroetsch's aesthetic, the separation between word and thing, like the separation between languages, is a fortunate thing.[13] The poet's sadness at the separation between language and life generates the poem, which in turn alters that life.

Not surprisingly, this commingling of poetry and life, sadness and joy, leads Kroetsch to a statement about why writing is "unconfrontable. It is that moment between death and madness" (Gunnars 67). The figures of the women in the text, insofar as they inscribe the textuality and differences of gender, reveal identity to be a fiction. Although they inspire the sadness, gladness and perhaps also the madness of the Sad Phoenician, they do not represent the figure of the female as the erotic but passive muse. Their own erotic quests and involvements far overshadow his. Kroetsch has said that as a male writer "I really depend on that relationship with a woman for that writing energy" (Twigg 109) but, as we have seen, the desire for an Other and for another language overlap.

Kroetsch has used aspects of the traditional dichotomy between male and female in some of his earlier work, but in The Sad Phoenician and others of his later texts the figure of the woman as lover is neither the figure of immortal woman as Muse (Twigg 109) nor as either prop or ruin of representation. By lifting the restrictions on subjectivity the figures of the Others in The Sad Phoenician (including the reader) function to free the poet's autobiographical act beyond the transcription of memory and speech utterance, beyond even the poem as intertext, to a writing practice founded upon an ongoing translation between speech and writing.[14]

Shoshana Felman describes the investments of translation in the lifting of psychic repression and, we might add, a poet's sadness. She writes:

> The very essence of repression is defined by Freud as a "failure of translation," that is, precisely as the barrier which separates us from a foreign language. . . . And while it is, no doubt, impossible--by passing from one language to another--to cancel out the "failure of translation," to suppress or lift the barrier of repression, it must be possible to displace that barrier, to make it visible in order to subject it to analysis. . . . "A national, mother-tongue cannot be dreamt: it makes a subject dream in its own dream. But the dreaming of

> one language may be the waking of another, and when it is night in one zone, it may be day in another." If the "failure of translation" between languages is in some sense radically irreducible, what is at stake in the passage from one language to another is less translation in itself than the translation of oneself--into the otherness of languages. To speak about madness is to speak about the difference between languages: to import into one language the strangeness of another; to unsettle the decisions language has prescribed to us so that, somewhere between languages, will emerge the freedom to speak (Writing and Madness 19).

The desiring and desired Others of The Sad Phoenician function to translate the poet out of self into the Otherness of languages. As John P. Leavey, Jr., suggests, "Translation is always in other words, mataphrase, always uses other('s) words . . . . That is, translation is transformation, self-transformation, metagraphic . . . . A transformation without identity, and so always other in its repetition--in other words" (196). Writing as translation deconstructs the notion of identity as the supplement of the self.

The Sad Phoenician, dedicated to Kroetsch's formerly Greek, now Canadian wife[15] and, within the context of his Completed Field Notes, as the author's note to that volume informs us, to "that reader I call Ishtar, that undiscoverable and discovered reader towards whom one, always, writes" (270), is dedicated finally to the Other's words and to writing itself and its ability to assuage the sadness both of the poet and of a people who, as Canadians, "experience the sadness of arriving late" into the world and do not quite believe what we see (Kamboureli, "A Poem out of Love" 49). "Freed from picture, into the pattern and tumble of sound" (The Sad Phoenician, cover note), we are freed not into our own uniquely Canadian use of the English language so much as we are liberated into the Otherness of languages and of language itself.[16] Freed, by the infidelities to language made possible by translation, into a belief in our own visibility, the text makes us possible. A national language cannot be dreamt, but it can be, and in fact always is, translated out of another language or languages. Because non-native Canadians experience the sadness of arriving late into the world, even those of us who are not poets become silent poets. Our sadness carries us to the place where language intersects with the things of the world.

The Sad Phoenician is the long poem as love poem. The Sad Phoenician is the Sad Phoenician of Love, and a section of the poem was initially published with the title "This Is A Love Poem," but Kroetsch says that he felt "there was too much direction given to the reader by that original title" (Kamboureli, "A Poem out of Love" 49). While it is true that the Sad Phoenician's "love for language overtakes the other aspects of love" (50), it is not the case that the poem is "not about love. It's about sex and about the erotic, and the Sad Phoenician is sad because he doesn't want to, or cannot, love" (49). The love for language does not supercede the love for the Other, as we have seen. The words "I love you" (The Sad Phoenician 35) are not empty cliché. They are performative in that they enact the real to which they refer. It is impossible to renounce the meaning of promises and the promises of meaning, because the language of promising is not constative but performative. And because it is impossible to renounce (what we perceive as) the real. It is possible, though, to say 'I love you' in every conceivable phrase but that one. Every place in the text where a cliché reverses itself, fades or breaks off, there is in that silence, that erasure, that subtraction, a palimpsest which makes visible and invisible at once the words 'I love you.' If, as Barthes claims, "The stereotype is that emplacement of discourse where the body is missing, where one is sure the body is not" (Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes 90), then the evacuation of the cliché allows the body (of the lover and also of one's self) a) not to be missed and b) to stop missing, which always makes one sad.

Kroetsch's emphasis upon the "speechness" of speech, like Barthes's upon the grain of the voice (The Pleasure of the Text 66-67), stems from his concern that the reader reading, like the writer writing, read/write from an embodied subject position. Kroetsch's work is not an attempt to unite male and female, mind and body, self and Other, in humanistic harmony. His project as a poet is through language to make us visible, embodied subjects in the lived world.

> Begin: the body writes the poem. You must stand close to the plate: even when the ball comes straight at your skull. You must be that innocent. First things first. You must come from a distant place, a bookless world (The Lovely Treachery of Words 11).

When you come from a bookless world, you do not come only from a speech economy. You come from a different set of body techniques. When later you enter a world full of books, you do not automatically transcribe that other world onto paper. You know you must first learn the new tongue. First things first. And you realize that you must translate.

IV. 'A new alphabet/ gasps for air':

Daphne Marlatt's Translation Poetics

> Hieratic sounds emerge
> from the Priestess of
> Motion
> a new alphabet
> gasps for air.
>
> We disappear in the musk of her coming
>
> (Phyllis Webb, 'Non Linear,' "Naked Poems," The Vision Tree 89).

The texts of Daphne Marlatt can be described as translative acts which explore and incorporate the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic elements of language, as well as the resources of gesture, performance and hysterical practice. What I would like to suggest in the following four chapters is 1) that translation theory provides a model for understanding the dynamics among these different semiotic practices, 2) that Marlatt's poetics can be described as a poetics of translation,[1] 3) that a poetics of translation offers new ways of analyzing women writers' relations to language and to men's literary works (i.e., 'the tradition,' 'the canon') within a patriarchal polysystem, and 4) that these translative writing practices overlap with, differ from and challenge a general grammatological or poststructural poetics.

In subsequent chapters I will perform close textual analyses of How Hug a Stone, Touch to My Tongue and "musing with mothertongue," but in the first chapter I will focus on Marlatt's work and some of the recent critical response to it--especially Lola Lemire Tostevin's article in the special issue of Line magazine devoted to Marlatt--as a means of reconfiguring her work's feminist, phenomenological, grammatological, and poststructural elements as part of a translative writing practice.

1. Unlimited Inc.orporation

Lola Lemire Tostevin, in "Daphne Marlatt: Writing in the Space That Is Her Mother's Face," criticizes Marlatt for what Tostevin frames as a nostalgic desire for origins. Tostevin holds the view that Marlatt's double recourse to the maternal body (the space that is her mother's face?) and to the roots of words is reductive, regressive and essentialist. Unfortunately, Tostevin, fooled herself by the etymology of 'etymology' (the true literal sense of a word according to its derivation, its fundamental original signification), ends up misreading, reducing and essentializing Marlatt's work. Her entire article is an attempt to draw attention to what she perceives to be the impure elements in Marlatt's writing, namely, an imagined nostalgia for origins as represented by the use of etymologies, traditional symbolism, the maternal body, and utopianism. She writes:

> Wordplay, the etymological breakdown of words, the story of language within language, has allowed many

> women to establish a newly found intimacy with language. Granting a word an ultimate definition, a final authority in its most ancient meaning, posits an origin, a truth, with which some women have felt comfortable (35).

Etymology has allowed "many women" / "some women" such as Marlatt (though not Tostevin herself, the suggestion is, who allies herself with the French philosophical and critical traditions) to bed down in a "comfortable" "intimacy" with patriarchal authority and truth. While this is a strange accusation for a heterosexual writer to level against a lesbian one, Tostevin's sexual and gender metaphors continue to cross and recross one another as she proceeds in the next paragraph to question this etymological impulse by framing it as a "search" for the lost or repressed mother and furthermore by describing this search as filiation:

> This genealogy, the filiation of a direct line leading back to a fundamental original signification, parallels the search for the lost mother on which traditional Western philosophy and literature are based and contradicts the open-endedness and new beginnings of l'écriture féminine which attempts to displace and exceed authority, truth, and the illusionary essence of origins.

Tostevin employs the French rather than the English form of "filiation" in order to indicate that she is also working from within the system of the French poststructuralist critique elaborated by such figures as Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Hélène Cixous, for example, all of whom she invokes in her article. The French term is used to signal to the reader the inference that these women writers' search for the absent mother is allied, paradoxically, with the very phallogocentrism which they are trying to evade, a phallogocentrism which is successfully deconstructed by the French critics.[2]

Yet another paradox imposes itself on the narrative. The bilingual Tostevin positions herself as speaking simultaneously from both the French and the Canadian critical streams. A contradiction intrudes, however, when she finds that the problem with "Marlatt's theory" is that it "differs" from that of Cixous:

> Marlatt's theory differs from Hélène Cixous' theory of _écriture féminine_ which also emphasizes textual play and language as presence, but which does not maintain a source, does "not say originary, because obviously there is no origin" (Conley 130). If each of Marlatt's books is an additional ring in the progression of a dynamic circular chain that grows and moves from past to present, each book also

> conveys a nostalgia for a source, an origin . . . (35).

The context surrounding the particular phrase quoted from Cixous in an interview with Verena Andermatt Conley has to do with the provisionality of words and terms (libido, economy, masculine and feminine, _écriture féminine_) and with how Cixous can use these various "linguistic instruments" without enclosing herself within their various systems (Conley 130-31). Therefore it actually runs counter to Tostevin's purpose of pointing out the lapses in Marlatt's work. If French feminist Hélène Cixous can be permitted the use of certain key words without being entrapped in the various systems they carry with them, then surely Canadian feminist Daphne Marlatt may be allowed a similar license. Instead, the suggestion Tostevin leaves us with is that to differ from Cixous is to dream comfortably on the couch of nostalgia rather than that of analysis.

Throughout her article, Tostevin makes a few weak but seemingly positive remarks about the aesthetic and feminist merit of Marlatt's work and her generosity toward other writers. Surprisingly, though, she chooses for the most part to borrow her praise from other critics of Marlatt. She quotes Frank Davey's statement from his 1974 book, _From There to Here_, about Marlatt's _Rings_ that it is "a book whose linguistic structure is 'one of the most beautiful in our literature'" (Tostevin 33). She relies on Davey's words to make the point that "'The phenomenological method of Frames results in some extraordinarily elaborate and detailed evocations of consciousness'" (32). Quoting Laurie Ricou, she writes that "There's little doubt that 'Marlatt is convincing'" (33). She also counts on Ricou to say that Touch to My Tongue is "'the most overtly feminist of Marlatt's books'" (36). She concludes her article with the compliment that, despite the contradictions within her work, Marlatt's "main story has remained that of language, and few people in Canada tell it so well" and with an allusion to "the generous dialogues" Marlatt has had "with so many writers during the last twenty years" (39), followed by a quotation from French writer Maurice Blanchot.

A more serious problem with her article than the secondhand praise, however, is that she makes little attempt to consider the effects of Marlatt's feminist aesthetic. The issue for Tostevin seems to be (and the use to which she employs the quotation from Cixous is telling) whether or not the word 'origin' or any of its synonyms appears in Marlatt's texts or her statements about her poetics. For example, while Tostevin concedes that "Much of Marlatt's use of etymology proliferates meaning" she does not illustrate or analyze this proliferation but moves immediately, without so much as a comma's pause, to complain "but more and more her work relies on originary/original meaning" (35). She then quotes from Marlatt's poetic essay "musing with mothertongue" a passage dealing with etymologies. Here is the quotation as Tostevin reproduces it:

> hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the import of what you say) and matter and by extension mother; language and tongue; to utter and outer (give birth again); . . . to relate (a story) and to relate to somebody, related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child); intimate and to intimate; vulva and voluble . . . (Tostevin 35).

Tostevin elides several of the clauses which deal most specifically with the linkages between language and the body. Her point in citing this quotation seems to be that it includes the word "etymology" and appears to link the tracing of word origins with a parallel regression back toward the figure of the mother. But here is the full paragraph from Marlatt's text:

> hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the import of what you say) and matter and by

> extension mother; language and tongue; to utter and outer (give birth again); *a part of speech and a part of the body; pregnant with meaning; to mouth (speak) and the mouth with which we also eat and make love; sense (meaning) and that with which we sense the world*; to relate (a story) and to relate to somebody, related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child); intimate and to intimate; vulva and voluble; *even sentence which comes from a verb meaning to feel* (emphasis added; 46).

Tostevin removes the body parts from the quoted passage. With these parts excised, the body is present only in a more abstract sense and the passage seems to valorize a model of communication constructed upon serendipitous connections between language and the maternal body. However, the passage in full deals not with originary meaning at all but rather with constructed, phenomenological, lived reality, with connections between the materiality of language and the physicality of the body, neither of which--language or body--Marlatt privileges as the origin of the other. Moreover, the linguistic model implicit in the passage is not one of communication but rather of translation.

Although it is indeed the case that, as Tostevin writes, "*Touch to My Tongue* is nevertheless centered in traditional symbols of the feminine, making it difficult to disassociate them from overdetermined associations" (36), surely it is the task of the critic to make the effort to dissociate Marlatt's use of these symbols from their patriarchal connotations, to discover how (and even if) they retain their patriarchal function within the context of the lesbian-feminist text. In failing to address these possible differences, Tostevin contradicts her own concluding remarks that "It would seem more vital than ever that in our newly created spaces we discover not only the multiple differences that exist between men and women, between women and women, but perhaps _more importantly, within each woman_" (emphasis added; 39). Does it follow that if a woman writer employs symbols drawn from patriarchal tradition her use of them will be traditional? Even if her symbolism were in fact conventional, would the text as a whole then necessarily recuperate or reinforce traditional structures and values, assuming that symbols do not perform the entire work of which a text is capable?

Tostevin invests heavily in what she perceives to be the aims of the poststructuralist enterprise. However, other critics working in and with problematical poststructuralist texts have produced more complex and satisfying solutions to similar problems. To select just two, there are the examples of Paul de Man's discussion of Walter Benjamin's use of conventional symbology in his essay "The Task of the Translator" and Réda Bensmaïa's illumination in The Barthes Effect of Roland Barthes's use of ancient rhetorical terms, neologisms from Latin and Greek roots, foreign words, and other obscure devices. De Man, dealing with the problem that Benjamin's text "seems to relapse into the tropological errors that it denounces," suggests the following: "Whenever Benjamin uses a trope which seems to convey a picture of total meaning, of complete adequacy between figure and meaning, . . . he manipulates the allusive context within his work in such a way that the traditional symbol is displaced in a manner that acts out the discrepancy between symbol and meaning, rather than the acquiescence between both" (89). Bensmaïa demonstrates that Barthes uses "'preciously ambiguous' semes" not to reify old signifieds but rather to float them, to summon other codes: "But contrary to what would occur for the concepts of a philosophical system, for example, the semes are never taken up in order to define or exhaust them. . . . As the words . . . are selected and scrutinized, the discourse is produced as a 'translation' of these words in an 'other site' and as an unfolding of all their potentialities" (20). I will pick up on Bensmaïa's point about discourse produced as a translation in another site later in the discussion of Marlatt's etymological work.

Moreover, Cixous, more than any other of the French feminists, has been charged (wrongly, I think) with the same kind of essentialism and nostalgia for origins that Tostevin is troubled by in Marlatt.[3] Toril Moi, for one, levels the same accusation against Cixous that Tostevin marshals against Marlatt, namely, that her "global appeal to 'woman's powers' glosses over the real differences among women, and thus ironically represses the true heterogeneity of women's powers" (Moi 125). The strategy of Moi's essay is to compare points of convergence and divergence between Cixous's thinking and that of Derrida. The convergences are duly noted and applauded while the divergences are dutifully described as regressions--moments of biological determinism and essentialism. But what is missing, by her own admission, from Moi's analysis (as from Tostevin's) is the kind of closer investigation of Cixous's work that will, as Moi concludes, "confront its intricate webs of contradiction and conflict, where a deconstructive view of textuality is countered and undermined by an equally passionate presentation of writing as a female essence" (Moi 126). It is ironic that both Tostevin and Moi sacrifice plurality in order to plead for différance. Tostevin compares Marlatt to Cixous and finds the former lacking. Moi compares Cixous to Derrida and locates 'lack' in Cixous. This regression toward the source as represented by Cixous or Derrida differs not at all from what Tostevin argues is the effect of tracking etymological associations in the dictionary.

This controversy within feminist critique over essentialism and biologism in the work of important women writers is a symptom of a series of untheorized gaps pertaining to the relations between corporeal and linguistic substance(s). This theoretical hiatus causes us to misread the colloquy between the body (specifically, the body gendered as feminine) and, for example, metaphor and symbolism; between the body and the archive or the dictionary; and between writing and speech in the practice of *écriture féminine* and the (m)other tongue project.

Much of the feminist criticism written during the past fifteen to twenty years has examined how women writers incorporate certain female body metaphors, especially maternal ones, into the structure of their texts. However, if neither the female body nor the text operates as the source, cause or original of the other, then what transpires in the exchange between the two? I would suggest that this exchange is a form of intersemiotic translation, that is, following Roman Jakobson, an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs from nonverbal systems (Jakobson 261) and vice versa. Not only does the text incorporate the body's signs (menstruation, childbirth, lactation, orgasm, hysteria, etc.). The body, organized (incorporated) by language, but always also retaining its 'fleshiness,' never wholly absorbed, mastered, expressed, or mimed by language, mothers its own tongue. The body, to use Elizabeth Grosz's formulation, "its epidermic surface, muscular-skeletal frame, ligaments, joints, blood vessels and internal organs, as *corporeal surfaces* on which engraving, inscription or 'graffiti' are etched," is also the place where inscriptions "coagulate corporeal signifiers into signs" (Grosz). If the body is the locus where desire is inscribed, it also writes-speaks-gestures-signs-sighs-sings back. Hysterical fantasies, for example, can translate themselves into the motor sphere, there to be staged in pantomime (Mahony 466). And, as in even the most traditional forms of interlingual translation, this intersemiotic translation alters the 'original.'[4] The 'original' (body or text) cannot be restored as such on the basis of the translation alone. The corporeal and the textual imprint, act upon and change one another.

These remarks will become clearer as we proceed for an interval through a double reading of Cixous and Marlatt. Barbara Freeman, in her article entitled "Plus corps donc plus écriture: Hélène Cixous and the mind-body problem," addressing the issue of essentialism in Cixous, analyzes brilliantly Cixous's rhetorical deployment of the body. Freeman convincingly demonstrates that "At the very moment that Cixous's critics accuse her of employing the body in order to ground sexual difference outside of language, they themselves do exactly what they ascribe to her; conceive of the body as if it were 'a universal, biological given', and thus in essentialist terms" (61). "Anatomy, the body, can no longer mean what Cixous's critics take it to mean once its priority in relation to the text has been called into question" (66). Cixous's contribution, neither essentialist nor anti-essentialist, is to corporealize the text and metaphorize the body such that neither term can be accorded the original or source (or, I would add, source text) of the other. Body and text are co-constitutive. Freeman interprets Cixous's notion of a feminine 'essence' as "non-essentialistic in that, identical to that which destabilizes any notion of essence, it is able to inscribe (or invent) a possible non-essential feminine specificity . . ." (68). Against Domna C. Stanton's argument in "Difference on Trial: A Critique of the Maternal Metaphor in Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva," Freeman asserts that there is a difference between metaphor as a collapsing of difference into sameness and metaphorization as a textual strategy:

> What I am calling Cixous's 'corporealization of the text' does not assert a likeness between two terms, but rather functions so as to locate difference where none had previously been seen to exist. To say, for example, 'the mother is also a metaphor' is not to

> imply a similarity between the maternal body and rhetorical trope, as Stanton would have it, but rather to displace the opposition between body and text and to locate each as already *within* its other or opposite. While metaphor may (or may not) assert similitude, metaphorization as a strategy insinuates difference; for if the 'mother' is a 'metaphor', so too the 'metaphor' must also be a 'mother'. Here the copula is employed so as to undo, not affirm, copularity, for through the metaphoric process the identity of both terms [is] displaced and undone (70).

Domna Stanton surveys extensively the work of Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, but she fails to analyze the textual strategies of these writers and fails also to re-examine metaphor in the light of the work it can perform within poststructuralist texts. Instead she shops through the works for short guilty phrases and culpable individual terms ("'the essence of femininity,'" "'rebeginning,'" "'the Mother goddess,'" "'woman-voice,'" etc.). Except for block quotations, she seldom quotes an entire sentence from any of her three subjects; her critique amounts to little more than synonym detection in a large number of texts. When she proposes metonymy as a possible alternative to metaphor, her solution is unconvincing (and conventional, authorized by the masters) because the reader suspects that a similarly reductive definition of metonymy could be found and supplemented by a survey of individual words and phrases. Stanton's failure to acknowledge the value of the physical, textual work performed by writing ultimately dismantles her argument. Despite her ostensible poststructuralist stance, Stanton's devaluation of writing and her reliance on the conventional interpretation of metaphor casts her as a figure within a rhetorical landscape of signs and not within a writerly landscape at all.[5]

While Lola Tostevin's critical endeavour to point out apparent contradictions within Daphne Marlatt's writing and poetics is, in some respects, useful, her assumption that Marlatt's use of etymologies and of lesbian and maternal bodies is a recourse to 'origins' and essentialism is not. Moreover, this assumption leads her to impose upon Marlatt's writing the very expectations and standards that Tostevin herself argues against in advocating the pluralization of differences. Paradoxically, her attempt to purge Marlatt's writing of metaphysics imposes upon it an aesthetics of purity, unity, coherence, clarity, and the logic of non-contradiction. The ending of Marlatt's novel Ana Historic will be unsatisfactory to "some readers," Tostevin contends: "Because the formal strategy of the novel so brilliantly subverts cohesion and narrative syntax and is not bound by master plot or one heroic voice--on the contrary, the narrative voice embodies many voices--its climax, both literal and literary, is unexpectedly conventional in its utopian vision" (38). At this point, near the climax of her own article, Tostevin, who had earlier distanced herself from "many women" and "some women," now inscribes herself along with some others under the rubric "some readers." She reads and writes not as a gendered subject, that is, but rather as a kind of sexually neuter but textually constructed subject. It is of some significance that, after subsuming her personal voice to those of other critics, this climactic revelation of her presence in the text as not-gendered coincides with the point at which she argues that sexuality, pleasure, women's imagination, and utopian visions are limited solutions to complex social problems. Ironically, the climax of her argument for the pluralization of differences between and within women coincides with the apparition of a non-gendered subject.

Several additional questions and issues are raised here as well. In the first place, if the formal strategy of Ana Historic subverts narrative conventions, then, logically, part of its subversion may well extend to claiming the right to subvert what is conventionally thought to be the subversive by providing an apparently typical climax to an otherwise deconstructed narrative.

Second, is the climax in fact utopian; more generally, is "a writing of _jouissance_ which cultivates, culminates in the pleasure principle and evokes the imaginative power of women writers" (Tostevin 38) utopian? By whose standards in each case? Third, is Tostevin's isolation and privileging of a single narrative climax consistent or inconsistent with her valorization of subversion and the deconstruction of master plots? Is not the expectation and requirement of a single climactic event not one of the primary master plots? While Tostevin states that "When Marlatt writes, 'mouth speaking flesh. she touches it to make it tell her present in this other language so difficult to translate. the difference', it is evident that she is referring to _the_ difference, keeping it within the traditional concept of binary opposition" (38), it is not at all evident that Marlatt is referring to binary opposition rather than Derridean _différance_ and to the act of translation between the body and language.

In short, contrary to Tostevin's argument for a deconstructive writing practice, she herself imposes an aesthetic derived from a rhetorical and logocentric critical tradition. Thus she misrepresents and falsifies the deconstructive project she positions herself to speak for and legislates for the very nostalgia she would excise in Marlatt.[6]

Furthermore, she ignores the aesthetic or textual effect of Marlatt's writing strategies.[7] Marlatt's concept of metaphor, for example, is very close to that of Cixous. In conversation with George Bowering as much as fifteen years ago, Marlatt discussed metaphor not as a reduction of two terms to a single one but as multiplicity simply there, to borrow a phrase from Steveston. She said:

> Metaphor has to do with the way things both are & are not themselves, are other things. The way we usually refer to it is: you have a discrete thing over here, you have a discrete thing over there, & there's an invisible bridge which is the metaphor. I dont understand that. Anything can be anything else, depending on one's point of view, one's specific vantage point ("Given This Body" 43).

American poet Charles Olson--for whom in the summer of 1963 Marlatt wrote a paper on etymology which would turn out to be a lead in to "all the writing I would subsequently do . . . it opened up language for me" (Marlatt, quoted in Wah's "Introduction" to her Net Work 8-9)--theorizing the poem as an energy transfer rather than the interposition of the individual as ego, criticized various rhetorical devices which force us to "partition reality" and thereby isolate us from what he saw as the active intellectual states, metaphor and performance. Simile, for him, was anathema. In the essay

"Human Universe" he wrote: "All that comparison ever does is set up a series of reference points: to compare is to take one thing and try to understand it by marking its similarities to or differences from another thing" (164). The trouble with such classification is that it only ever accomplishes a description. Description robs things of their particularity and their 'thingness' and robs us too of our experience of them. As a remedy to this kind of verse-making Olson translated the idea of 'proprioception,' the sensory reception in our bodies responding to stimuli arising from within, from physiology into poetics. The result was his theory of projective verse. As Fred Wah says in his introduction to Net Work, Marlatt is one of the most disciplined proponents of proprioceptive writing (15).

Second, a possible alternative to conceiving Marlatt's work with etymology and mythology as essentialist might be to cast it as an inscription of "the proper name effect."[8] In Greek mythology, the nymph Daphne chose to be metamorphosed into a laurel in order to escape sexual assault by Apollo. If a writer's name were Daphne, it would be almost mandatory for her to explore the complicity of that name both with gender relations and with mediations between women and the natural world, not to mention the name's duplicitous implication with poetry and poetics. According to the 'Daphne' entry in The

Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets "The myth seems to have been suggested by an icon showing the Goddess's face looking down from the branches of a laurel tree upon the sacred king immolated at her feet. Laurel remained the plant of inspiration and poetic frenzy" (Walker 207-208). However, an examination of etymology as a sign of the proper name effect would have to confront the extent to which, for the woman writer, the proper name (or signature) effect is deconstructive and the extent to which it is complicit with patriarchal practices. That is, are the effects of raising the signature into the text the same for writing subjects configured as feminine as for those configured as masculine? Does bleeding the proper noun into the common noun function to disappropriate even as it appropriates, or for the woman writer is this intralingual translative erosion of the proper name just more of the (logic of the) same?

In the following passage, Derrida describes the net gain possible in the recuperation of the proper name:

> By disseminating or losing my own name, I make it more and more intrusive; I occupy the whole site, and as a result my name gains more ground. The more I lose, the more I gain by conceiving my proper name as the common noun . . . . The dissemination of a proper name is, in fact, a way of seizing the language, putting it to one's own use, instating its

> law (The Ear of the Other 76-77).

Does the woman writer raise her signature into the text in order to purchase real estate there, to "occupy the whole site," to gain "more ground," or is she, as Marlatt explains in responding to Janice Williamson's question about her use of naturalistic metaphors for the female body, trying not only to reclaim lost territory but simultaneously to decolonize territory designated as female, territory Marlatt refers to as a "sensorium":

> For instance, if I talk about our sexuality as a hidden ground, then I have to make a distinction between ground that is laid out, gridded, cleared for use, dry land versus unmapped, uncharted, untamed land that is wet and swampy and usually discarded. So there is a difference within the landscape metaphor (Williamson, "Speaking In" 27).

What degree of 'properness' can we assume adheres for women to the proper name? For women, property (ground), propriety, naming, and language have always been extremely problematical. To what extent is the strategy of "The more I lose, the more I gain" for women a practice of self-denial and self-abnegation which has proven ineffective in our individual and collective struggles for equality? To what extent might feminist experiments with etymology and mythology represent not a return to origins or an impulse toward a masculinist version of essentialism but perhaps an 'improper' version of the proper name effect, one that pays homage not only to the differences among women but to both the differences and similarities within our collective inheritance at once?

In questioning the degree of applicability of Derridean textual practices to the analysis of women's texts, Linda Kintz's article "In-Different Criticism: The Deconstructive 'Parole'" is helpful. Kintz argues that Derrida's deconstruction is of, by, and for the white male Subject, and she charges that Derrida's caution to women not to reproduce the dialectic of sex "anchor[s] his theory to a dialectic that appears to be unsusceptible to transformation" (132). According to Kintz:

> Derrida's brilliant readings have been centered on a Subject who is male, white, European; then that critique of subjectivity has been generalized, like a metaphor that substitutes the genus for the species. The Subject, the general term, covers the more limited one, the male of the dominant class, but it claims universality, a pattern or experience characteristic of all human beings. The deconstruction of the Subject has thus been generalized to cover all subjects, even those who were never included in that core group of Subjects. We have gone from Subject to subject, with no pause for gender differentiation, or for race and class

> distinctions (115-16).

Kintz diagnoses Derrida's concern that women speaking like men will perpetuate the dialectic as his failure to "factor in gender or color as disruptive and inappropriate threats to the specular dialectic" (131). Like Barbara Freeman and Naomi Schor, whom Freeman quotes, who think that "playing off 'essentialism' and 'anti-essentialism' as antagonistic and mutually exclusive may not lead feminist theory in productive directions" (Freeman 69), Kintz concludes that it is possible and desirable to work on more than one project at a time, even apparently oppositional or contradictory tasks. Kintz proclaims:

> We must take seriously, even as we work to undermine them, the effects of gender differentiation, which is "translated by and translates a difference in the relation to power, language, and meaning" [sic] . . . . But what we are beginning to notice is that there are (at least) two dramas of subjectivity, and if we keep at it, if we keep refining our terms, we may find a way to talk about activity that is not simply an analogy for masculinity. Because we are past the time when women need to be shown our absence from history and language, we might carry on a project that is a dialogue--a continuing dream of utopian indifferentiation, of "incalculable choreographies," while we also take the time to find

> ways to theorize our activity as culturally-constructed, gendered subjects, speaking bodies, real fictions. Such a dialogue may help us theorize what metaphysics has always missed: "le moi corporeal" (132-33).

My point is that in our critical practice we must continue to search for ways of talking about feminist writing strategies that do not simply invoke or reproduce monological models of textual 'activity' the way Domna Stanton reproduces traditional assumptions about the functions of metaphor and applies them to Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva and the way Lola Tostevin reproduces strictures about essentialism with regard to Marlatt's work. Gender may not be elided in or by rhetorical, deconstructive or reader-response methods of interpretation. As Kristeva notes (in the sentence misquoted in the passage from Kintz's article above), "Sexual difference--which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction--is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract" (Kristeva, "Women's Time" 21). Gender is a function of the translation between various discourses (power, meaning, sexuality) and the body; and the gendered body translates (I will not say 'speaks' or 'writes') in reply. If the subject is translated textually, it is also translated sexually. Or, in Grosz's metaphor of inscription and reinscription: "As well as being the site of knowledge-power, the body is thus also a site of resistance, for it exerts a recalcitrance, and always entails the possibility of a counter-strategic reinscription, for it is capable of being self-marked, self-represented in alternative ways." Because we have yet to learn how to receive this translation, this reinscription, this "mouth speaking flesh" (Marlatt, quoted in Tostevin 38), is not sufficient reason for attempting to censor its significations.

Marlatt's archaeological project of recovering and reappropriating the gendered body from under the weight of the dictionary, that archive which regularizes and legitimizes our use of language, is an effort to re-member lost body memories by describing certain bodily experiences which have become alienated from women's discourse by the negative experience associated with them under patriarchal culture. In "musing with mothertongue," she writes: "if we are women poets, writers, speakers, we also take issue with the given, hearing the discrepancy between what our patriarchally-loaded language bears (can bear) of our experience and the difference from it our experience bears out--how it misrepresents, even miscarries, and so leaves unsaid what we actually experience" (Touch to My Tongue 47). For her, etymology is "almost like a racial memory, verified in the recording of the relationships of words to various civilizations" (Williamson, "Speaking In" 27). The racial memory encoded in etymologies is a function of successive generations' experiences of language, body and world. We are born into language, as language is born in us:

> the beginning: language, a living body we enter at birth, sustains and contains us. it does not stand in place of anything else, it does not replace the bodies around us. placental, our flat land, our sea, it is both place (where we are situated) and body (that contains us), that body of language we speak, our mothertongue. it bears us as we are born in it, into cognition (Touch to My Tongue 45).

Unlike the fathertongue--the language of the dictionary, the speller and the grammar text, for example--"mothertongue" (the article 'the' preceding the word is absent in "musing with mothertongue") does not "replace the bodies around us." It does not substitute words or syntactical units for our experience of others and of the world. In mothertongue, language is not split into signifier and signified. Rather, it is part of our continuous relation to our world, at once both self and other. In the words of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose work has been influential in shaping

Marlatt's poetics, "all corporeality is already symbolism" (98).

The etymological reclamation work Marlatt undertakes in her texts is to substitute the lost memories of women for the arbitrary order of the dictionary, substituting without erasing the latter. In "musing with mothertongue" physical memory is juxtaposed against the artificial memory of writing as that term has been patriarchally conceived (writing as men's expression of their interaction with the world):

> where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood is as it leaves her body? how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows? or the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies, children, friends, animals, all those she customarily holds and is held by? how can the separate nouns mother and child convey the fusion, bleeding womb-infant mouth, she experiences in those first days of feeding? what syntax can carry the turning herself inside out in love when she is both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover's tongue? (47-48).

Throughout her poetic essay, the body, imprints and residues of embraces, and the presence of the Other (writer, reader, lover) in the text supplement writing understood as tangible, material black marks on the page which represent the rhetorical use of the voice and thereby supplant the rest of the body and its signifying potential. The tongue, the organ which, as Marlatt says, "touches all the different parts of the mouth to make the different sounds" (Williamson, "Speaking In" 28), is also a major organ in making love. Lovemaking, then, is a form of organ speech just as poetry is a form of verbal speech. Desire is not contained in language, or expressed through language. According to Marlatt, desire "moves through your body at the same moment as it moves through the language" (28).

Etymology, then, is for Marlatt a source of delight, inspiration, historical information, memory, and a collaboration with her lover, as this excerpt from a letter to Betsy Warland demonstrates:

> anyway i discovered that, as the Weekley Etymological Dictionary notes, "lust" has developed "peculiar" & negative connotations only in English because the Latin in the Bible was early translated into the "lusts of the flesh." in other languages lust has life-affirming senses: Old Norse losti, sexual desire; Gothic lustus, desire; Latin lascivus, wanton, playful; Greek lilaiesthai (isn't that a

> lovely sound?) to yearn: Sanskrit, *lasati*, he yearns, & *lasati* plays. there's a quote from Francis Bacon in the Webster's 3rd Internat.: "the increasing lust of the earth or of the planet" which is the closest i found to "fertility of the planet." an intense longing, a craving, is one of its other senses ("Correspondences" 30).

As Marlatt remarks in conversation with George Bowering about her novel *Ana Historic*, "the trouble with writing fiction is that it replaces memory. You may remember it until you write about it, *and then the writing itself replaces the actual memory*" (emphasis added; "On *Ana Historic*" 96-97). Her etymological archaeology is *not* a privileging of origins but rather, through the process of writing, a kind of deconstruction of the text and reconstruction of lost memory tissues ('text' means 'tissue'). As Derrida asks of Ferdinand de Saussure in *Of Grammatology*: "Why should the mother tongue be protected from the operation of writing? Why determine that operation as a violence, and why should the transformation be only a deformation? Why should the mother tongue not have a history, or, what comes to the same thing, produce its own history in a perfectly natural, autistic, and domestic way, without ever being affected by any outside?" (41). Here Derrida is not using the phrase "mother tongue" in the same sense that Marlatt uses it, nor as I am using it here. He is referring to the concept of the mother tongue as the vernacular, the spoken language of the people. Yet the questions he raises can be directed to Tostevin's argument against Marlatt's etymological work.

In other words, just as the word 'lust' has acquired its present meaning because of a Christian translation and appropriation of the term, writing for Marlatt is part of a translation process which radically alters memory, both forgotten and recalled. In "musing with mothertongue" Marlatt describes the woman writer's place as "that double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, sense and non-sense." As she realizes, writing/translating from this double edge, "risking nonsense, chaotic language leafings, unspeakable breaches of usage, intuitive leaps" (Touch to My Tongue 48), simultaneously releases life in "old roots" and inscribes a new old mother tongue. This translation is possible and necessary because in its common usage even the very name 'mother tongue' implies a language which has been alienated, superceded or annulled by another. As Kaja Silverman observes, the term 'mother tongue' attributes to women sole knowledge of that language within which lack can be experienced and known (20-21). Theorists of the process of the subject's entry into language routinely posit this entrance into signifying systems as a choice between meaning and life, significance and insignificance. They are more than willing to surrender or abandon the presymbolic or semiotic in the Name of the Father (i.e., the symbolic, the native language). However, for Marlatt, meaning is always already constituted in the sonorous envelope, the eye contact and the gestural hieroglyphs of the 'mother tongue.' Here the word 'tongue' becomes inadequate as this domestic vernacular pervades the body as a whole and actually blurs the boundaries between two bodies. Furthermore, this bond with the mother and the feminine more generally need not, should not and in fact cannot be irretrievably renounced, forfeited or signed away in negotiating the social contract.

Marlatt does not write "in the Space That Is Her Mother's Face." She writes in the spaces between and among languages. Translating from a source language--the mother tongue as native language, the vernacular--which is never entirely pure or unitary, into a target language--the (m)other tongue--which does not exist as a language separate unto itself either, the feminist writing practices which engage both Cixous and Marlatt, _écriture féminine_ and writing the (m)other tongue, involve the exploration of writing as a process of translation into a language which emerges only in the act of translation. Such writings inscribe an 'interlanguage,' a separate, yet intermediate, linguistic system situated between a source language and a target language and which results from a learner's attempted production of the target language (Toury 71). _Ecriture féminine_ and writing the (m)other tongue excavate and translate the pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic elements of language and incorporate, without limit, the body's lesser-analyzed signifying resources of gesture, performance, hysterical practice, and lovemaking.

Jane Gallop urges that "The question of language must be inserted as the wedge to break the hold of the figure of the mother [because patriarchal discourse structures the very ideas of 'mother' and 'woman']. _Ecriture féminine_ must not be arrested by the plenitude of the mother tongue, but must try to be always and also an other tongue." The (m)other tongue is a composite that is no one's mother tongue and can only be comprehended in two languages at once (328-29). There are more ways of relating to mothers and to the feminine body than patriarchy has dreamt of.

> learning to speak _in public_   to write love poems
> for all the world to read   meant betraying once &
> for all the good Mennonite daughter i tried so
> unsuccessfully to become   acknowledging in myself
> the rebel traitor thief   the one who asked too
> many questions   who argued with the father & with
> God   who always took things always went too far
> who questioned every thing   the one who talked too
> often too loud   the questionable one   shouting
> from rooftops what should only be thought guiltily

in secret squandering stealing the family words
the one out of line recognizing finding myself
in exile where i had always been trying as
always to be true whispering in pain the old
words trying to speak the truth as it was given
listening in so many languages & hearing in this one
translating remembering claiming my past
living my inheritance on this black earth among
strangers prodigally making love in a foreign
country writing coming home

(Di Brandt, "foreword," Questions i asked my mother).

2. Writing under embrasure: How Hug a Stone

> His discourse is full of words he cuts off, so to speak, at the root. Yet in etymology it is not the truth or the origin of the word which pleases him but rather the effect of overdetermination which it authorizes: the word is seen as a palimpsest: it then seems to me that I have ideas on the level of language--which is quite simply: to write (I am speaking here of a praxis, not of a value) (Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes 85).

In "Unlimited Inc.orporation" I argued that Daphne Marlatt's etymological work was not a return to the origins of words or to an exclusively female language but rather part of her poetics of translating toward a (m)other tongue. In this and the next two chapters I will look at and listen to this interlanguage in How Hug a Stone and Touch to My Tongue. "Musing with mothertongue" will be treated separately in chapter four. If William Carlos Williams's long poem Paterson is, as he announces in the equation which immediately precedes his preface to the poem, "a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands" (2), a translation from the written tradition of British literature (with its residues of Greek and Latin verse) into the grain of the American voice, then Marlatt's most recent texts can be read as a reply to patriarchal discourse with the hands, the ears, the tongue, the throat, the limbs, and the embrace of the Other.

Fred Wah notes in his introduction to Marlatt's Net Work that "The most important books for her when she's writing are dictionaries" (9). In his article "Recursions Excursions and Incursions: Daphne Marlatt Wrestles with the Angel Language," Dennis Cooley muses that Marlatt's fascination with etymology has always been there in her work and is increasingly present. "The inclination brings together her interest in origins _and_ in reflexive writing within a system. They announce further an engagement in a textual world, and not in any way direct or raw experience, the dictionary presiding over them" (72), he writes. Cooley improvises upon Marlatt's etymological exploration of the word 'indigene' to suggest that

> Everywhere Marlatt seeks the essential self . . . . To be [indigenous], in place, first, primary, born to the language when word and world would be one, were one. When, presumably, the roots Marlatt rinses out under her stream of words and documentation, will restore words to authenticity and remove the detritus that time has deposited on them (78).

One of the strengths of Cooley's analysis of Marlatt's recourse to the dictionary is that, unlike Lola Tostevin, he allows two apparently contradictory possibilities to coexist in her work, namely, the desire for a return to an "unconditioned language" (_Ana Historic_ 75, quoted in Cooley 78) and a recognition that there is no such thing as unconditioned language.

One must be cautious, however, about equating

Marlatt's or any other writer's use of the dictionary or etymological associations as a generative device with a recourse to origins and a privileging of an unmediated discourse where words and things operate in a reciprocal exchange. Such an assumption forgets that the dictionary too is a socially constructed tool for, among other purposes, maintaining separate spheres of high and low languages. The entry of a given word in the dictionary removes that word from its lived context and installs it in an apparently neutral but actually socially and politically determined environment. In his very provocative article "'The Dismal Sacred Word': Academic Language and the Social Reproduction of Seriousness" Allon White draws to our attention that the very first English dictionary, Robert Cawdrey's A Table Alphabeticall (1604), was produced specifically with women and "any other unskilfull persons" in mind. The preface to this dictionary advertised the volume as follows:

> A Table Alphabeticall, conteyning and teaching the true writing, and understanding of hard usuall English wordes, borrowed from the Hebrew, Greeke, Latine, or French. &c. With the interpretation thereof by plain English words, gathered for the benefit & helpe of Ladies, Gentlewomen, or any other unskilfull persons.
>
> Whereby they may the more easilie and better

> understand many hard English wordes, which they shall heare or read in Scriptures, Sermons, or elsewhere, and also be made able to use the same aptly themselves (quoted in White 8).

As White points out, the "hard wordes" defined in English dictionaries are largely Latin words used by the 'high' discourses of religion and formal education (book-learning). White convincingly demonstrates that the codification of these hard words estranges women from their own national language or mother tongue:

> Holding out the tantalising promise to the reader that she will gain skill and power through the purchase of the book, it nevertheless places her precisely as an outsider to her own national language, by and in the very act of producing the "table alphabeticall". These words are not her words, they belong to others, the learned men who constitute themselves as learned by producing the separation of language assumed and reproduced in dictionary-making. . . . The borrowing of hard words from Hebrew and the Classics not only ensures the authority of religious and classical learning (the institutions of which excluded women completely until very recently) it produces an exclusive lexicon for the "high" language generally which, codified and systematised in dictionaries, reproduces and

> objectivates its authority too (and even today the frequency of use of latinate terms is a clear indicator of sociolect) (8).

Dictionaries play a seminal role in the maintenance of the hierarchy between high and low (major and minor, serious and comic, masculine and feminine) languages by virtue of their self-referential structure: that which is to be taken seriously is defined in and by its own words (11). It is in this sense, then, that Marlatt's etymological translations function as a reply to Greek and Latin, and English, and many other languages as well.

. . . . . .

How Hug a Stone, the narrative of Marlatt's trip to England with her son in 1981 to visit her mother's side of the family, opens with the dedication "for Edrys who was also Tino." This double naming triples with the reader's realization that Edrys/Tino was the woman whom Marlatt knew as 'mother.' A series of maps reproduces the itinerary of this return to her mother's mother country, which Marlatt had last visited in 1951 when she was nine, en route to Canada with her family as emigrants from Malaysia. Part 1, "Crossings-over," referring to the Atlantic ocean crossings during these different trips, recalls the etymological derivations of the word 'translation': to transport, to carry across, transfer. These literal crossings-over parallel the translation into and by another language and culture that began upon the emigrants' arrival in British Columbia. Under the title of Part 1 are the titles of the first four poems of *How Hug a Stone*, which (as names of departures and destinations) anticipate and merge into the actual map reproduced on the page following.

The "departure" poem is delayed, however, by the intercession of italicized notes which collect under the first map of the city of London and immediate environs. One of the sentences in italics informs the reader of the language estrangement the travellers begin to experience right away: "*melodic repeats of English, speech patterns volleying back & forth 2 seats away--we can't catch all of it*" (14). Marlatt and her son, "two living letters" (Introduction), flying and travelling by train over various geographies, are immediately immersed in the necessity of intralingual translation from English to English. As they are translated bodily across the ocean, the movie on the plane is an "Agatha Christie version of what we fly to" (15). Significantly, the movie's plot has an "enraged mother at the heart of it" (15), and the windows onto the geography below are closed for the duration of this movie.

Speeding through the English landscape by train "it is the rackety clacking of the wheels that is familiar, or this sideways motion" (16). It is also the son's getting a cinder in his eye, because this event recalls for Marlatt a similar experience of her own as a child and being asked by her mother "didn't i tell you?" (16). Body motion and body accidents reproduce the familiar in two of its senses of 1) something repeated and 2) pertaining to the family. The son is 'familiar' in that his mother is very familiar with his body; she, like her mother before her, is the one who removes the cinder from the child's eye.

He is also 'familiar' in that he reminds the writer of herself as a child. In the next poem-entry, "grounded in the family," Marlatt's step-brother recalls for her the time, thirty years previous, when "i am the child" (17). The step-brother, who "has named every flower in all four directions," catches moths in order to "fix them in their families" (17), to assign them to their scientific names. This sense of family as the taxonomy of species contrasts with Marlatt's linguistic exploration of the 'moth' in 'mother'[1] and her improvisation upon 'family' in terms of hostess, hostage, host, and guest.

The word 'familiar' continues to be analyzed in the poem "narrative continuity." Here "this house is familiar," although in terms of language "what was familiar now is relic." The language itself has aged during just thirty years of Marlatt's transplantation in another country:

> relics i recognize, even family phrases i've heard from his mother in Canada. crossings-over. as my childhood family had its language, covert because "so English" in North Van. & my mother driven wild: why can't they teach you how to speak? when i brought the colloquial home, flaunting real fine with me 'n her (19).

Relics of Old English in contemporary British speech are a kind of "word henge to plot us in the current flow" (19).

Immersed in "a constant stream of speech" Marlatt notes, and notates her writing with, English expressions and expostulations. She also notices physical, genetic similarities such as "Mephistophelian brows" and "the full feminine mouth i see in my sister, the moods of my mother." But even as her son "imitates an English accent" he is "finding it hard to breathe, allergic to the nearest thing we have to a hereditary home" (24).

Just as the antiquity of English speech makes it redolent with the flowers of rhetoric and poetry, so Marlatt incorporates the rhetoric of flowers into the poem "June near the river Clyst, Clust, clear. Clystmois this holding wet & clear" (25). The English step-brother knows the Latin names for plants and insects but Marlatt favors the ordinary names of "cow parsley, stinging nettles, campion, 'day's eyes' & snails all colours coiled in their leaf byways," although she does connect the Latin phleum pratense, otherwise 'timothy,' grass of the meadow, "a masculine given name, god honouring," with her son's phlegmatic allergic reaction. Working from the following two lines of an old poem or expression, "'Sweet an' dry an' green as't should be, An full o' seed an' Jeune flowers,'" she translates inter- and intralingually: "jeune the young, green June delayed by rain. June why do you punish me?" (25).

In the next poem 'the familiar' takes on another meaning. Marlatt's cousin informs her that the red dirt of Devon is "sandstone parent material risen from the sea." The etymology of parent, to get, beget, give birth, from parcae, the Fates, connects the mother with the mythological spinners of one's destiny. But these connections are not made through the dictionary or mythology alone. Because of the family connection with Devon, and because her mother's ashes were scattered over the sea after her death, the phrase "sandstone parent material" connects for Marlatt "my mother's trace" with literal Devon bedrock. Furthermore, her aunt's spinning wheel sits "in the family room," and the aunt tells Marlatt that the fleece she is currently spinning is "the real thing." Genealogy becomes a function of that which is actually in the air (words and phrases, plus the smell of fleece) and under foot. Etymology allows Marlatt not to find the universal in the particular but instead to take the universal (or Latin) down to the sensory and bodily particularities of "dirt of Devon fields, sheep turd & grass smell" (26).

The definition "Familia. household servants" (27) introduces yet other dimensions of the familiar--class and social position and gender construction. The television is playing an episode of A Town Called Alice, the story of life in a small town in the Australian interior, and this connects Marlatt's childhood in Australia with the life of her mother as a young woman and then young mother of three. Marlatt's own grandmother speaks with the singsong intonation of what her son describes as the speech of "all colonials deprived of an English education. it's what we call Anglo-Indian" (28). In this musical, dark-veined speech the grandmother describes the beauty of her daughter Edrys as an eighteen-year-old girl dressed for her first public occasion. Her story of her daughter's dress ends with the words "and she looked a dream" (29). In her own intonational speech Marlatt interprets this story of the dress as "her [the grandmother's] dream, the one my mother inherited, her dress, my mother lending her body to it. as i refused, on a new continent suffocated in changing rooms thick with resentment: you don't understand, everybody wears jeans here & i want a job.

refusing the dream its continuity" (29). The grandmother's story continues, as she relates how, just a few months prior to her wedding day, Edrys had told her mother she wanted to be not just a wearer of such dresses but a dress designer and maker. The smell of coalsmoke runs through these narratives of the early life of Edrys, connecting her in her daughter's mind via the sensory allusion of this smoke smell to the etymological root of coal, geulo-, ember from India. Using this olfactory memory as a guide, Marlatt tries to remember back to her own first years as the baby in the family in Australia: "did they burn coal in that house in Melbourne? smell of damp linen, of coal ash, of kerosene on the asphalt outside" (30). The smell of coal, familiar to the body, is translated intersemiotically with the word 'coal' to push back memory, family history and understanding.

Marlatt's son, Kit, tape-records the sound of the English phone[2] and himself stalking, not the family or the familiar, but "wildness." Speaking into the recorder, he casts himself as "Adventurous Marlatt" "always on the Safari, always having to fight Wild Animals" (36). His mother, on the other hand, is trying to understand the "wildness" of her mother, her panic, "pan-ic (terror of the wild)" (55). Her dead mother, ember from India, become "bits of porous bone, fine ash" (55) scattered over the sea, has completed her autobiography as the rebellious schoolgirl and young woman (wild mare), become mother (mère), and eventually returned to the sea (mer) the crossing-over of which led to her eventual madness, wildness. The mother refused that final crossing-over, refused to translate or be translated. Her final wish was for her ashes to be scattered over the Pacific ocean, "a different sea-coast off a different rock" (55) representing the one she did not, finally, cross.

With Kit ill with allergies and a virus, and dealing with her own cold and her sorrow at her mother's circumscribed life and premature death, Marlatt takes on some of her mother's pain and panic: "there is no limit. something in me is in shock, like a bird beating wildly against a branch--lost, panicked. why are we going through this?" (71). Terror, she discovers, springs not only from encountering "Wild Animals" and poisonous snakes but from entrapment within the family and other institutions (such as boarding schools far from home) and from having a child fall sick. "Stories can kill" (51), Marlatt writes, both those romantic stories which leave us with "a script that continues to write our parts in the passion we find ourselves enacting" (73) and those stories which are "unwritten, de-scripted, un-described" (35). The dictionary definition of 'evil' is 'exceeding the proper limit.' Marlatt asks "what is 'the limit'? for either the dead or the living?" (68). Our desire is to go beyond "the limit of the old story," "to redeem them [our ancestors], or them in ourselves, our 'selves' our inheritance of words. wanting to make us new again: to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old words" (73). Our mothers, the mother, is "not a person", not even a name (Edrys, Mary Gypsy, Mary of Egypt, Miriam, Mary of the Blue Veil, Sea Lamb sifting sand & dust, Bride of the Brown Day, etc.) (72). "She is what we come through to & what we come out of, ground & source. the space after the colon, the pause (between the words) of all possible relation" (73). Mother is the "forgotten parts" of the old story; she is the mother tongue; she is the possibility of language and relation. She is what makes us want to speak what is not spoken. "*Narrative is a strategy for survival*" (75).

Contrary to what critics such as Lola Tostevin and Frank Davey believe, Marlatt does not in this book advocate a return to the Great Mother, the essential feminine or an undifferentiated identification with her own mother. *How Hug a Stone* is not, as Davey suggests, a "metaphysical" "counter-narrative of a primal feminine" "which locates the human outside of social action in an archetypal predetermination" ("Words and Stones" 46). The figure of the mother near the end of the text is *not* "the lithic mother" (45).[3] Marlatt resolutely *refuses* to map her personal quest for her dead mother onto the mythological story and associations of the circle of stones at Avebury. She writes:

> she lives stands for nothing but this longstanding matter in the grass, settled hunks of mother crust, early Tertiary, bearing the rootholes of palms. they bring us up, in among stone-folds, to date: the enfolded present waits for us to have done with hiding-&-seeking terrors, territories, our obsession with the end of things.
>
> how hug a stone (mother) except nose in to lithic fold, the old slow pulse beyond word become, under flesh, mutter of stone, stane, stei-ing power (How Hug a Stone 75).

Marlatt's own mother does not live on in some archetypal form from four thousand years back. Marlatt made it clear as long ago as 1974 that "I'm not really interested in the eternal by itself. I think that that's a danger, too; that's a seduction. I'm interested in the interaction between the eternal & what's time-bound, & what's particularly local. And I think you can only articulate the eternal thru that" (Bowering, "Given This Body" 58). For her, etymologies, mythologies and dreams are all "other languages or events that are recognizable in our own lives" (56). Even history, let alone mythology, may be no more accessible or real than "simply the shell we exude for a place to live in" (How Hug a Stone 51). As Marlatt says "she lives stands for nothing but this longstanding matter in the grass." How to articulate the present and local material world is what ought to engage us.

Marlatt concludes that difference from the mother ("& i can do nothing but stand in my sandals & jeans [attire her mother opposed] unveiled, beat out the words, dance out names at the heart of where we are lost, hers first of all, wild mother dancing upon the waves") (78-79), being "where live things are soaring" (77) and where rapture can be found in feeding the pigeons in Trafalgar Square, and embracing not mythology but actual stone and rock brings us up to date, to the enfolded present, in order "to speak to, call to (here, pigeon, come on, it's all right) the free & unobliged" (77). The mother is "first love that teaches a possible world" (78), and it is to that possible world that Kit wants to return, the world of Vancouver which his mother has given to him, and which Marlatt herself had earlier claimed from her mother. All she can do is to stand unveiled and open to this possible world and the language she finds there, answering to the "claims of the dead in our world (the fear that binds). i am learning how the small ones live" (79).

The title "How Hug a Stone" is not "How To Hug a Stone." This is not a how-to book. It is not a recipe for how to connect with one's parents and grandparents through voyaging to their mother land, visiting selected tourist spots and writing up the results. How Hug a Stone is a question. It is a question as to the possibility of embracing the family of ancestors and of replying to the wild heartbeat. It asks how to mother one's children and how to mother oneself. The pictogrammic gesture of literally hugging a literal stone asks how we can deploy our physical bodies in relation to the physical world of which bodies are a part. This physical hieroglyph of literally embracing the present, physical world gives us "stei-ing power." The Great Mother is, as Phyllis Webb's promotional blurb on the back cover clarifies, the mother language, stone-writing, type-writing, and the poetry of things. The "monumental" stones of Avebury are writing in stone. To embrace one of these stones is simultaneously to embrace the physical and writing. In this embrace, one's body becomes a writing on stone, a pictogram.

The dead live on through love and through our shared fears over the accidents of life. They do not live on through symbolic regression to Greek or Latin, Druid mythologies, or English etymologies. The dead live on through passages or crossings-over, through acts of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation.

3. Translating the body: Touch to My Tongue

> Ever since I began writing professionally, I have assumed that my Mother Tongue is English, period. Certainly my main sources of inspiration as a non-fiction writer have been English-language writers--Orwell, Mailer, Didion--and my sense of pleasure with language has been experienced mainly in English. But somewhere in the back of my consciousness is that Ukrainian language I heard all around me as a child: by what devious routes might it be asserting itself in my English syllables and syntax? What **nostalgia** and longing for the Slavic syllable is making itself felt as I choose English words and phrases? Perhaps **this** is my Mother Tongue--the one in which my baby mind was coddled and aroused--and English is my **Sister**-Tongue (Myrna Kostash, "Ethnicity and Feminism," in the feminine 62).

Because Daphne Marlatt's immigrant experience emerges from a colonial British background it is easy for readers to overlook the fact that she considers her immigrant experience to have exercised a profound influence upon her sense of language. In "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination" Marlatt reflects, "Looking back, i think that most of my writing has been a vehicle for entry into what was for me the new place, the new world" (219). She talks about the intralingual translation which was necessary upon settlement in Canada because "We came from a colonial multicultural situation in Penang where five languages were spoken in our house (English, Malay, Cantonese, Tamil, Thai) to a city [Vancouver] which was then (1951) much more monocultural than it is today, decidedly WASP, conservative, and suspicious of newcomers. We spoke the same language but not the same dialect . . ." (220). Difference was marked by every detail including food, clothing, sports, names of things, pop culture, music, flora and fauna, subjects for nightmares, etiquette, school subjects, and reading material. Marlatt enthusiastically adopted the multiple facets of this new dialect to become a Canadian teenager. It was not until years later that she began to feel that "like a phantom limb, part of me, that Penang past, not quite cut off, still twitched alive and wanted acknowledging" (221). This phantom limb syndrome, this bodily memory, and the translation of the body in the poem sequence of _Touch to My Tongue_ will be the subject of the present chapter.

In "Entering In" Marlatt describes how her mother's progressive isolation in her Canadian home led to her increased nostalgia for things English: "My mother wanted to keep up 'English' in our values as we struggled very hard to become Canadian. This led to a deepening neurosis i could neither understand nor address" (222). While her daughter wrote her way into the world she wanted to be part of, multiplying her signifying capabilities in the process, the mother, in her progressive neurosis, confined and reduced her signifying production by trying to enforce Englishness. The daughter's sense of linguistic estrangement led "to a sense of the relativity of both language and reality." She acquainted herself with the idiosyncratic and shared features of language, its essential duplicity and its figurative or transformational powers:

> When you are told, for instance, that what you call earth is really dirt, or what you have always called the woods (with English streams) is in fact bush (with its creeks), you experience the first split between name and thing, signifier and signified, and you take that first step into a linguistic world that lies adjacent to but is not the same as the world of things, and indeed operates on its own linguistic laws (222).

The daughter swam into the flow of languages; however, the mother, as a mother, made desperate hysterical attempts on her own behalf and that of her children to salvage her native dialect and culture.

This first-hand experience of the split between signifier and signified extends for the immigrant writer, according to Marlatt, to an awareness of the duplicitousness of the second-person pronoun and of the sense of a unitary self: "the sense that the you you were in that place is not the same you as the you you are in this place, though the two overlap, produces a desire to knit the two places, two (at least) selves, somehow" (223). In Touch to My Tongue published in 1984, a year after How Hug a Stone, this desire to explore the problem of the relation between the multiple selves constructed through language and place, and between these selves and

Others, finds expression in the multiplicity of forms included in this slim volume: the treated photographs, the prose poems, the poetic essay "musing with mothertongue," a glossary to several of the poems, and a statement by the photographer Cheryl Sourkes about her photographs (which are from a series called, significantly in terms of the present discussion, "Memory Room"). Taken together, this cohabitation of different forms constitutes a truly picto-ideo-phonographic text.

Sourkes comments that "The admission of language into the image follows the first human marks from 100,000 years ago when writing and pictures were one" (53), thus invoking pictogrammic writing. Within the photographs, as Janice Williamson has observed, the problematic of the visual representation of 'woman' is developed:

> Reproduced from a series called "Memory Room," the photographs are archaeological in form with images layered one on top of the other. Reproductions of Chinese face reading, a pre-eleventh century woman's alchemical text, an Eleusinian womb-like maze, and the medieval figure of "gramatica" create a collage of different visual signifying systems, all of which give meaning to the universe through the body. . . . It is significant that the single representation of the female body in these photographs is a drawing of the medieval figure "gramatica," emblematic of "the

> study of literature and letters." Here the female figure becomes a kind of hieroglyph, or pictorial language which blurs the distinction between woman and writing ("Amorous Sites" 161-62).

Williamson goes on to develop a paradoxical relation between the "desirable otherness" of the hieroglyph and its apparently transparent, visual readability. She observes that "Marlatt's series of poems take up the hieroglyph's associations with the contradiction between enigmatic otherness, and the sense of proximity" (162).

This description of the duplicity of the feminine body with regard to sameness and difference and its apparent collusion with the hieroglyph is reminiscent of Mary Ann Doane's discussion of female hysteria as the desire to desire, and indeed Williamson acknowledges Doane's article on "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator." What I wish to develop, however, is not the problem of female spectactorship or the feminine body as spectacle but rather how the profusion of picto-ideo-phonographic signifying systems in the text inscribes the female body differently from the way it is inscribed in logocentric texts. We will begin from Doane's reading of Freud's analysis of female hysteria in order first to recall the orthodox psychoanalytic account of the female body and its desires and signifying capacities.

Doane describes how, in his case history of Dora, Freud posits the process of 'somatic compliance,' whereby "the body complies with the psychical demands of the illness by providing a space and a material for the inscription of its signs" (Doane 40). Thus, "The symptom for the woman, as sign or inscription on her body, gives witness to a dangerous overcloseness which precludes the possibility of desire." Doane quotes Michel Foucault's statement that "'Diseases of the nerves are diseases of corporeal continuity. [The hysterical body is] A body too close to itself, too intimate in each of its parts, an organic space which is, in a sense, strangely constricted . . .'" (66). This constriction, this corporeal continuity in which Freud and Foucault read the body of the female hysteric as functioning in sympathy with the psyche to such an extent that there is no differentiation between body and psyche and therefore no space for desire (which operates by substitution and displacement in relation to an object), sounds very much like the interior of the logocentric subject. Indeed, the very notion of somatic compliance is figured on the basis of a logocentric model of writing in which the material substance (paper or body) is compliant with or subordinate to psychic demands.

What I call the pictogrammic body, however, does not work from any of the intertwined principles of somatic compliance, logocentrism or Cartesian dualistic models of the mind and body. For instance, ancient Chinese face reading need not be understood as an attempt to plumb the inner psyche but perhaps as the reverse, namely, an attempt to map alternate versions of the self. Marlatt's phantom limb phenomenon or bodily memory of living in Penang as a young girl, for another instance, speaks of a kind of bodily signification which is typically untheorized because subsumed to the type of memory believed to have its seat in the mind. In "Sounding a Difference," Marlatt returns to a discussion of her experiences of memory murmuring in the flesh:

> . . . the experience of being back there in Penang so many years later and remembering, and yet not consciously remembering, having a memory that was in the body somehow, but wasn't consciously accessible until I got there. I couldn't have said how to get from A to B, but at a certain point, rounding a corner, I got an immediate flash of what I would see when I got around that corner, and I could not have foretold it until I was in that actual movement around that particular spot. And memory seems to operate like this, like a murmur in the flesh one suddenly hears years later (Williamson 49).

The motility of the body makes linkages between different times and places. The body troping itself as pictogram links topoi. The body thinks, re-members and signifies these remembrances in the same gestures in which it evokes them.

. . . . . .

Despite "a confusion of times if not of place" (19), the lovers make their first appearances in Touch to My Tongue flying down the street in the rain, holding hands as they walk along, and talking over capuccino and brandy in a cafe. The speaker reads the features of her lover's face only insofar as "i see your face because i don't see mine equally flush with being." In addition to this flush as a sign of Otherness (the Other gives her to herself--she cannot see her own face), she reads the traces of ethnicity, that particular sense of Otherness, in the lover's face. What she sees in the lover's glow are "fjords in there." Being together is literally a "co-incidence." The lovers meet "in these far places we find in each other." Their co-incidence partakes of their shared sense of being from another place and time as well, not mythic time but cultural memories (Sappho on the radio, the British claiming Bombay) and books read. The co-incidence in the midst of contradiction is a cause for celebration. The "Danish Tearoom--the Indonesian or Indian" refers obliquely to both of their ethnic backgrounds--Scandinavian and colonial British in India.

In "houseless" (20) Marlatt explores another dimension of Otherness. Spatially distant from her lover she realizes painfully and fearfully that "i can only be, no vessel but a movement running, out in the open, out in the dark and rising tide, in risk, knowing who i am with you--." The great mother of the first poem becomes the terrible mother, she who "takes back what she gives, as you might, or i might," in the second. To quell her fears the poet calls the lover up, on the phone or in her memory, and it is their bodily memories of one another as "creatures of ecstasy," their incorporation of "tide swelling" and "continent draining" (this is an echo of the previous poem, therefore connecting the past and present at the level of the writing of the poem to the personal and political past which the series envelops), that allow them to be, at risk, in love.

The allusion to the double figure of the great mother/terrible mother here does not reflect the lovers' nostalgia for a prelapsarian order. The figure of the maternal conjures up Marlatt's own personal and political background--her mother and grandmother both had a lifelong connection with India. Marlatt elaborates in "Speaking In And Of Each Other" on how "most women's lives have been so fictionalized that to present life as a reality is a strange thing. It's as strange as fiction. It's as new as fiction. . . . Whatever it is that writing gets at, it's precisely that remarkable quality of being alive at this point in time. I don't see any way of honouring that quality except by writing directly out of your own life. It's the real I want to get at, in all its facets, in all its multiplicities" (Williamson 26). Marlatt's inclusion in her work of textual allusions, whether symbolic or etymologic, is part of her strategy to access all of "the real." Whether she draws upon symbolic logic or etymologic she attempts in the act of writing to connect memory with present and future possibility. She uses writing to try to recover women's memories. These recovered memories in turn can create a new writing and social practice: "In a sense, it's almost like a racial memory, verified in the recording of the relationships of words to various civilizations. There is also a connection between memory and possibility. The invention of possibility which is utopian allows for a new practice" (27). The double aspect of the great mother/terrible mother multiplies within the context of the first two poems to touch upon Marlatt's own mother, her grandmother, the elements of the mother/daughter relationship which are rehearsed in the relation between the two lesbian lovers,[1] and the relation of any being to life itself. The lovers, "turned out" (of paradise?) by virtue of the spatial distance between them, realize that in their lovemaking they are also "turned inside out, beside ourselves" (Touch to My Tongue 20), and they use this body knowledge, these memories of rising "drenched from our own wet grasses, reeds, sea," to reclaim their being for one another, to reclaim their geography and their right to be safe in the social world.

In a 1976 interview, "There's this and this connexion," Marlatt explicitly connects mythology with the reclamation of geography, terrain, habitat, and a sense of place. Questioned as to the connection between her interest in recording local reality in an authentic and accurate way and her interest in mythic reality and in writing out of what the questionner describes as "an almost religious sense," Marlatt responds as follows:

> Well, brother, what can I say to that that might be useful? . . . I am interested in mythic thought. Because it seems to me that myths--well myths are a language in themselves but they do tell us how the early or first inhabitants of a terrain saw themselves in terms of their terrain, they tell us about inhabiting a place, and they tell us about the powers of the earth we inhabit which we've lost the sense of (Cooley et al. 32).

Marlatt goes on to suggest that perhaps this particular approach to the language of myths "brings us to what lies beyond or outside our personalism and all our modern psychology that closes the world upon ourselves" (32). In other words, her use of mythology is not a transhistorical, transpersonal or transcendental impulse but rather the recourse to yet another language in which to access the real and the local. Mythology is a graph of the geo. Someone else's mother tongue. The actualization of the real in time and space.

"Yes" (21) pushes off from the word "JADE" and explores the implications of its dictionary meanings of "'worthless woman, wilful girl.'" "JADE a sign on the road announces," and the poet reads it as an advertisement for 'stone of the flank,' the place on her body that she "couldn't bear the weight of his sleeping hand upon" during her marriage, as her own exhaustion and spiritlessness during that time, and as 'cure for kidney disease.' Heterosexual marriage, traditionally marked by the breaking of the literal hymen of the woman and/or by the mythological figure by the same name, is contrasted with being "broken open by your touch," without loss, abandoning the "need for limits" and "the urge to stand apart." The image of the wedding band and the "white band the skin of years hidden under its reminder to myself of the self i was marrying" is replaced by "our mouths' hot estuary, tidal yes we are, leaking love and saying it deep within." For Marlatt the wedding ring symbolizes both heterosexual marriage and "this small open space that was mine" prior to marriage. "This small open space that was mine" refers both to psychic space, a sense of self, and to the vaginal opening. Thus the ring symbolizes a somatic compliance between psyche and body.

By contrast, the lesbian lovemaking is both love _and_ its utterance, love's body and love's word, two lips speaking together. This other "yes," "redefined, it signals us beyond limits in a new tongue our connection runs along" (21), is pronounced "yu" (23). "Yu," the notes to _Touch to My Tongue_ inform us, is "the Indo-European root of 'you,' second person pronoun; also an outcry as in Latin _jubilare_, 'to raise a shout of joy' (as the initiates at Eleusis might have done on seeing the luminous form of the risen Kore)" (36). It is not a promissory "yes" but a performative one. The words 'I do,' "I will' or 'I promise,' supplemented by a wedding band, promise to love, etc. This other "yes" ("yu") does not promise to love--from this day forth. It does not enact a promise; it enacts love. "Yu" does not promise; it loves.

In the lesbian relation, lovemaking and its jubilant cry of "yu" literalize the body of the Other and/as love. This literalness is simultaneously the symbolization of love and its asymbolization. Lesbian love moves into the narrow space posited between the woman and her body and opens it up, expands it. Whereas it is believed that desire cannot insert itself into what is read as the metaphoric gap in the somatically compliant body, the lesbian lovers, on the other hand, locate desire without loss, without finitude, a limitless procession of rings. If to sign is to say 'yes,' then the lesbian lovers sign with their bodies. "Tidal yes we are, leaking love and saying it deep within" (21).

It is significant that the word 'wild' takes on new, less troubling and more exciting associations in Touch to My Tongue than those surrounding it in How Hug a Stone. In the earlier book the associations of wildness gathered around the mother's emotional disturbances. The first appearance of 'wild' in Touch to My Tongue occurs in the poem called "kore" (23), in which the lesbian love relation accumulates further elements of the mother-daughter relation. Even as the mythological parallel is drawn, however, it is reduced, played down and problematized within the context of this particular poem. It is undetermined which lover plays the role of Demeter and which Persephone. The title "kore" might suggest that not Marlatt but her lover Betsy is Kore. Yet her eyelashes, "amber over blue," recall "(amba, amorous Demeter, you with the fire in your hand, i am coming to you)," which suggests that Betsy is Demeter. Furthermore, along with this naming/unnaming there is the complication of the second person pronoun. The poem chants "no one wears yellow like you," "no one shines like you," "no one my tongue burrows in." The delectable description of lovemaking leads to the statement, in parenthesis, "(here i am you)." As the poem works toward orgasm, "lips work towards undoing," the mythological connotations of Demeter and Kore are stripped down to the Indo-European root of the word 'female' itself, which originally meant 'to suckle' but has diversified into 'fetus' (that which sucks), 'fellatio' (sucking) and 'felix' (fruitful, happy) (36). In other words, the evolution of the term 'female' also radically (at the root) complicates the pronoun 'you' and the positionality of the Other. In turn, the second person pronoun, by virtue of its Latin root jubilare, 'to raise a shout of joy', accretes to Otherness the cry, jubilation and excess. It is not simply that the self is discovered through intersubjective discourse (or intercourse) but rather that the body is allowed to leak into discourse. The Other is not, in this new translation of Other, simply a means to the solidification of the unitary self. Sex is not a detour through the Other toward a refreshment of ego boundaries. "Extended with desire for you and you in me it isn't us" (24), as Marlatt writes in the poem following, refusing the reduction of two to one implicit in the traditional mathematics of love in the western world. You plus me is not subsumed by 'us.'

Moreover, this new translation of 'you' insofar as its sense includes 'to raise a shout of joy' is performative. To say 'you' is not only to designate or name that which is not the self. It is simultaneously to enact Otherness, and one's pleasure in the Other. Witness the following exchange between Marlatt and George Bowering:

> DM: Of course. I've always been fascinated by whatever that other was--what is beyond the self, outside the self; & the fact that we're really restricted in all our perceptions to what's here.
>
> GB: Do you have to understand the other?
>
> DM: No, you dont have to understand it. You have to experience it.
>
> GB: Or no, experience what it can do to you. Because I dont think you can experience it.
>
> DM: Of course you cant experience being it. But you have to somehow let it in. You have to let that dark flood the stage, you have to turn off all the lights ("Given This Body" 45).

Saying 'you' in Marlatt's sense of Otherness is the exaltation experienced at the entering in to oneself of that Other. It is just after this point in the discussion with Bowering that Marlatt makes what has become her much-quoted statement that "All my poetics are, is connections" (46). She abandons a perspective precisely in order that such categories of thought as, for example, light as clarity and darkness as obscurity are deconstructed. Once these logocentric categories are deconstructed, the dialectic collapses and different synapses and different bodies come into play. The pronoun 'you' becomes the verb 'to raise a shout of joy.' Motion leaks everywhere, as Fenollosa said ("The Chinese Written Character" 11). And when motion is leaking everywhere like electricity from an exposed wire the body surges ahead of language, its materiality and its motility exceeding categorical thought.

The lover is "exultant, wild" (Touch to My Tongue 25). There are "wild canada geese in the last field" (26) as Marlatt drives east onto the prairies. Terra firma is not wild, but hidden ground is, "lowlying, moist and undefined, hidden ground, wild and running everywhere along the outer edges" (27). In "Unlimited Inc.orporation" we have seen how, in an excerpt from a letter to Betsy Warland, Marlatt relays her discovery of latent connections between sexual desire and the "'lust of the earth or of the planet'" and of how 'lust' has developed "'peculiar' & negative connotations only in English because the Latin in the Bible was early translated into the 'lusts of the flesh.' in other languages lust has life-affirming senses" (Marlatt, "Correspondences" 30). For Marlatt, as for bpNichol whose phrase it originally was, syntax equals the body structure. That is, syntax does not mime or express body structure. Rather sentence construction is comparable to the construction of the body. If one thinks and writes in complete thoughts, then the body will reflect that closure, completion, fait accompli. Marlatt uses her resistance to the sentence as her basic translation unit. If one abandons the notion of the sentence as a complete thought and noses a way, for example, into the unnamed female folds of stone or hills or lover's body, then that one can find "alternate names" (27), can find "that tongue our bodies utter, woman tongue, speaking in and of and for each other" (27). Janice Williamson meditates on the transformation of the idea of author implicit in such a writing practice:

> She writes, "water author sounding the dark edge of the words we come to, augur- ess, issa" (27). The reader is drawn from "author" to "augur- ess," an association that creates a kind of feminized translation of "author." Thus, the roots "garrire," to speak, and "augere," to increase, transform the activity of the "author," meaning "to originate," into a more organic less unitary notion of author as one who increases and "makes grow," or interprets as in "augury." It is of course up to the reader to produce these associations and make the connections between signs ("Amorous Sites" 154).

Both author and reader must succumb to augury. Both must work to interpret the differences within, for example, the landscape metaphor of lesbian sexuality as "hidden ground."[2]

The erotic body, the loved body, and the remembered body of the lover are the focal points of "in the dark of the coast." The lover converses with a small bird singing in the underbrush in the same way that her body, her skin, answers to the touch of the other woman. The lovers, reunited after a period of some considerable absence, find that there are new things to discover about each other. Marlatt writes: "i didn't know your hair, i didn't know your skin when you beckoned to me in that last place. but i knew your eyes, blue, as soon as you came around the small hill, knew your tongue" (30). The tongue she knew is both the literal organ of the tongue and perhaps a shared lovers' language not unlike "the hidden Norse we found." Paradoxically, the sense of distance, parting, absence, mourning, and separateness is very prominent in this poem about what would normally be thought of as erotic fusion. The emphasis, however, is not upon merging of identities in one another but upon how "your naked, dearly known skin--its smell, its answering touch to my tongue" creates a "separate skin we make for each other through."

In the final poem of the series, "healing," it is as if the lover's body has translated a number of the important semes developed in the rest of the series. As she tends to her lover's needs following gall bladder surgery, Marlatt is led to consult the dictionary for the etymology of the word 'gall.' The history of the word gathers up words meaning to shine, words for colours (yellow), bright materials, bile or melancholy, glad, glass, glaze, and glee. It almost seems as though just as the lover's skin produces an "answering touch to my tongue" (30) so her body responds to her partner's poetic sequence in bodily symptoms, the etymology of the name of which traces a course through the entire sequence. In the same way that Cheryl Sourkes's photo collages intermingle with Marlatt's poems and poetic essay, so the lover's body insists itself into the text. If lovemaking is a form of organ speech just as poetry is a form of verbal speech (Williamson, "Speaking In" 28), then the loved body transgresses the bounds of traditional textual decorum and has its say within the poet's text too. If the erotogenic body can translate itself into bodily symptoms, then it may be possible for it also to translate itself, or for the physiological body to translate its symptoms, into the tissue of a text. The material substance of the body translates itself intersemiotically into linguistic substance. If the body can carry memory in its tissues, then so too can the tissue-text be imprinted with not only the lover's erotogenic body but her symptomatic body as well.

The phrase "gall, all that is bitter, melancholy" (32) refers to an earlier organization of the body in which the mind-body relation was arranged around the four humours. Seizing on the word 'glisten,' one of the derivatives of 'gall,' Marlatt puts the letter 'g' in parentheses so that the word doubles as a visual and an aural term. This "(g)listen," this intralingual translation, leads in the text to the sound of a bird call just as the two lips of the lovers reawaken 'lust' in both its bodily and its linguistic senses. Their lovemaking brings the word to their and our senses. The non-sense of the body translates itself into the sense of language. Through her etymological tracings and translations, Marlatt reoralizes the dead languages[3] of Latin, Greek, Old English, Old Norse, and many others. The old roots of these languages serve as a source text from which to inscribe a new target language. At the conclusion of the poem sequence, the lovers return to their bed and (g)listen to a new (m)other tongue.

4. The reorganization of the body:

"musing with mothertongue"*

> if we are poets we spend our lives discovering not just what *we* have to say but what language is saying as it carries us with it (Daphne Marlatt, "musing with mothertongue," *Touch to My Tongue* 46).

> We have seen previously that, caught between the sense we give to reality and the non-sense patriarchal reality constitutes for us, we are most often forced to adapt our lives to simultaneous translation of the foreign tongue (Nicole Brossard, *The Aerial Letter* 112).

> Sober and enraptured, already familiar with the place where you know how to put your hand so as to bring about the effect of reality: lovhers. while i am still trying to read/delirium (Nicole Brossard, *Lovhers* 29).

The body is not nature. The body is not a woman. The body is not a mute. No. The body is a persistent and perpetual translator. *Jouissance* ceaselessly circulates and recirculates pictogrammic, ideogrammic and phonetic signifiers so as to avoid congealing the body around a single organ, a single frozen drop of flesh. The body is not only a sum of its visceral organs but a series of contiguous libidinal surfaces and striations. The body is its own signifier. The body is a lifesize, mobile and audible pictogram.

"Musing with mothertongue," the poetic essay which follows the serial poem, glossary and photocollages in Daphne Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue*,[1] restates and elaborates upon her thoughts concerning the relation between language and body in her work. Marlatt has always evinced a strong drive to literalize the body. The issue for her is, given this body, how do we stay contained within it and not interpose our own ego between ourselves and that body?[2] How do we avoid constructing, or at least how do we from time to time puncture, or punctuate,[3] the interior volume of a logocentric self which reduces the body to gross matter?

In the following passage from a 1988 interview, Marlatt talks about how her view of the relation between language and body led her, in her novel Ana Historic, to defer the seemingly inevitable lovemaking between the characters Annie and Zoe. She did not want the narrative's ending to be a conclusion, she says, but only another beginning:

> I suppose this has to do with where I place myself against Christianity, which has taught us to defer bliss to life after death. But language itself, especially writing, is another kind of deferral. In the humanist tradition it was thought to be a vehicle pointing to what was real beyond the writing. And we've now come to think of it very differently as a signifying process present to itself. To speak of what has been excluded from the world of literature, which is women's desire, and to make that present in

> a language of presence is a big challenge
> (Williamson, "Sounding a Difference" 52).

If writing is a signifying process present to itself alone (or, alternatively, deferred only from itself rather than from a transcendental signified), then the problem of how to speak of women's desire (absent, latent within the body) in such a writing is addressed by our desiring, deferring and deferred bodies. Just as writing refers to writing, so the desiring body, as, for example, in Marlatt's poetry, signifies itself. The desiring body, the body of _jouissance_, has its own compositions and positions. Desiring and loving bodies collect a history, a language and a skin of their own. Because "my body does not have the same ideas I do" (Barthes, _The Pleasure of the Text_ 17), it must not be spoken of and represented in standard models of spoken and written composition only. The erotogenic body can be spoken, and listened, _to_ and inscribed in intersemiotic translation.[4]

The body cannot be divided from language, because language is, as Marlatt writes, "a living body we enter at birth" (_Touch to My Tongue_ 45). Language shapes, configures and partially but not entirely determines our bodies. Our bodies are part language. Our physiological body parts are also grammatical organs, diagrammed, conjugated, and mobilized by cultural inscriptions. In bpNichol's phrase, syntax equals the body structure

(Nichol, "'Syntax'" 25-31).[5] Syntax is not identical with but equivalent to the body structure. Most assuredly though, for Marlatt language "does not stand in place of anything else, it does not replace the bodies around us" (45). Language, in other words, is not *only* referential. The body of language is also our horizon, "placental, our flat land, our sea." Both *topos*, "place (where we are situated)", and trope, "body (that contains us),"[6] the flesh of language is the flesh of our world. Language as a living body envelops our lived world and lived body. As Marlatt said in 1974 with regard to Gertrude Stein's work, "Well, she sees language as a code. I dont want it to be a code. I want it to be the transmitting itself" (Bowering, "Given This Body" 68). Throughout her work Marlatt consistently demonstrates a concern for access to the literalness both of the body and of language. For her, articulation, especially by women writers, is "a visceral event" (68).

A crucial aspect of the literality of language is what Marlatt calls its musicality. In "musing with mothertongue" she says that "language is first of all for us a body of sound" (45). Language's physicality derives primarily from its oral/aural qualities. For babies, as we know, the world and themselves are not separate. The outside world is body as well. Children learn language nonreferentially because, as Marlatt insists, "language is literal. . . . Any word is a physical body. It's [sic] body is sound, so it has that absolute literal quality that sound has, which connects it up with sounds around it" (Bowering, "Given This Body" 69). For her, language is evocative rather than referential. "It can never be referential, because you simply arent given, in reality, that other out there" (79). It is only a gradual and lifelong process whereby we figure out "what the words are actually saying" (Touch to My Tongue 45).

Language works by evocation, not invocation. Thought works by association. The physical bodies of words provoke each other into utterance by attraction along an associative, metonymic chain. Association is "a form of thought that is not rational but erotic because it works by attraction" (45). Like attracts like. Even difference attracts liking. Words, like lovers, "call each other up, evoke each other, provoke each other, nudge each other into utterance" (45). The rhetoric of our thinking is erotic. Thus for Marlatt the simile is more than a comparison between two objects using the words 'like' or 'as.' In her view, words, phonemes and syllables like one another.[7] She uses 'like' as a verb rather than as a preposition.

Marlatt also uses the fulcrum of the word 'like' not to subsume one term by another but to highlight the metaphoricity of the body. In common rhetorical usage, the tenor of a metaphor is the discourse or subject which the vehicle illustrates or illuminates.[8] A comparative term is invoked to clarify, brighten, or render poetic a primary term. The traditional definition and usage of the simile is essentially Platonic in that two things, essentially unlike, are juxtaposed by virtue of a resemblance in a single aspect of their being. In the simile it is forms which are analyzed and compared. The traditional use of the simile thus reinforces metaphysics. In this formal analysis there is no room for erotic attachments. However, as Marlatt points out, the Germanic _līk-_ refers to "body, form; like, same" (45). Therefore the etymology of 'like' can be read as positing a different (not an original) dynamic at work in similes.[9] The idea of sameness is present in this new dynamic, but it is not necessarily a sameness in the sense of an irreducible similarity of being or nature. It is sameness by virtue of the mutuality of attraction or the pull of two or more bodies toward one another. Erotic attraction is not always or even necessarily based on similarity: erotics is based upon the play of both sameness _and_ difference. Rather than producing analogy, this other kind of simile is based upon the physical attractions of speech and the sounds of a given language or languages. Thus Marlatt might define the simile as the process of attraction between two bodies (words as particles of language, or human bodies) by virtue not of the fundamental similarity of a single aspect of their being, and thus a reduction of the two to one, but rather by virtue of their multiple and contingent physical (signifying) attributes.

Marlatt's erotics of rhetoric works to develop parallels between the human body and the body of language without privileging either term, tenor or vehicle, of that simile. In the following passage, discussed in the chapter "Unlimited Inc.orporation" with regard to Lola Lemire Tostevin's excision from it of the phrases dealing most specifically and concretely with body parts, Marlatt explores some of the attractions between the physical body and the material body of language[10] and in the process traces out familiar, forgotten and novel circuits of exchange between these two bodies:

> hidden in the etymology and usage of so much of our vocabulary for verbal communication (contact, sharing) is a link with the body's physicality: matter (the import of what you say) and matter and by extension mother; language and tongue; to utter and outer (give birth again); a part of speech and a part of the body; pregnant with meaning; to mouth (speak) and the mouth with which we also eat and make love; sense (meaning) and that with which we sense the world; to relate (a story) and to relate to somebody,

> related (carried back) with its connection with bearing (a child); intimate and to intimate; vulva and voluble; even sentence which comes from a verb meaning to feel (Touch to My Tongue 46).

The serendipitous similarities between the language used to describe the body and that used to refer to language itself are not used by Marlatt to transport us back to some ur-text, some utopian or matriarchal era, or to some original innocence of connection between body and language. Rather Marlatt uses this attraction between parts of the body and parts of speech to form new alliances. It is not her desire to erase the present or to move backwards in time. She is translating forward, forging sense where there has been only non-sense, aspects of our lives which have been invisible to us because, as she says, "in a crucial sense we cannot see what we cannot verbalize" (47).

When she draws an analogy between poetry as a form of verbal speech and lovemaking as a form of organ speech (Williamson, "Speaking In" 28), Marlatt is using the word 'speech' metaphorically in order to point to the signifying capacities of the body itself. In turn, this new awareness of the body's sign production rereads or unsettles that which we presently understand as verbal speech, poetry and texts. As readers, we must become oriented to traces of the body in the text. Our responsibility in this regard is not merely to assimilate these traces as metaphoric. As if we were reading a translation, which we are, an intersemiotic translation, we must not privilege only the target text. Instead we must read the marks, gestures and postures of the body too. Within this translation model, we must allow ourselves to be "lured beyond equivalence" to "a new skin."[11] The reader reading, like the writer writing, must climb into a pictogrammic body.

Marlatt's emphasis on sound and speech, though, does not place her solely within an oral poetics. She draws upon the lineage of poetry "which has evolved out of chant and song, in riming and tone-leading" (Touch to My Tongue 45). However, her poetics also derives out of the prelinguistic and nonreferential significations of the child and the current gaps in our language for the inscription of women's bodies. Etymologies, which she uses liberally to generate her texts, depend upon dictionaries and literacy. Moreover, Touch to My Tongue includes photocollages not just as illustration but--insofar as they invoke the intersemiotic translation between words and images, and pictogrammic writing--as instructions in how to read the interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translations of the poem series. That is, Marlatt, like Hélène Cixous, does not preconfigure the body as external to words nor as entirely coded by them either. She strives not to locate the body in either of these epistemes but instead to continue to translate between epistemes.[12] For her, just as the text metaphorizes or translates the body, so the body metaphorizes the text.[13] When body and text as two material substances or tissues are invited to attract, metaphorize and translate one another, different textual practices are initiated, and different bodies constructed.[14] The body is both translatable and untranslatable: translatable in this intersemiotic exchange between two material substances; untranslatable in that like a proper name or any other untranslatable word it transfers nothing except itself as pure signifier. The smooth and slippery body, like the proper name, announces paradoxically 'translate me' and 'don't translate me.'

Etymology, in addition to sound, is another force of attraction among words that allows various forms of translation to take place. Etymologies form the "history of verbal relations (a family tree, if you will) that has preceded us and given us the world we live in" (46). Marlatt's translation poetics contains a genealogical component.[15] Language and its history of verbal relations, etymology, like our own mother's body, is "the given, the immediately presented, as at birth" (46-47). Hence language and the etymon are part of the phenomenological horizon of our lives, which is never really given (in the same way that etymologies do not allow us to time-travel back to a prelapsarian, maternal or matriarchal condition). As a feminist writer, Marlatt "take[s] issue with the given, hearing the discrepancy between what our patriarchally-loaded language bears (can bear) of our experience and the difference from it our experience bears out" (47). Because both history and language are constructions, says Marlatt, we can change the reality we live in: "We're not stuck in some authoritative version of the real" (Williamson, "Sounding a Difference" 52).

Of course, one very important aspect of the real which is also a function of translation is gender difference. Marlatt lists examples of some of women's experiences which have been invisible to patriarchal language. These include such experiences as gestation, menstruation, body cycles, breast-feeding, intimacy, and lovemaking. If the real is a construction, and if the body is the medium of the real, then through translation between the body and language the body can be not just represented but reconstructed, re-realized, reorganized. Marlatt describes the act of writing as a translation between the prelinguistic given (this given can be equally the body or the external world) and language. She states that "Everything is prelinguistic, & as soon as you get into linguism, language, humming it, uttering it, you get back into the problem of translating. . . . Plus the fact that it's even more complicated than translating, because language has its own presence & its own insistences & its own connections, which you have to take into account all the time" (Bowering, "Given This Body" 58-59).

Here it is necessary to make a distinction between prelinguistic and presignification. The body conceived of in phallogocentric terms exists prior to language. However, it is accurate to say that the body is prelinguistic only if language in turn is conceived to be entirely absorbed by or identical with its referential functions. The problem is that we lack names for different signifying practices of the body. Some, such as dance, have been culturally assimilated as art forms extraneous to language (although certain avant-garde artists incorporate language into contemporary dance). This is why we have to research such practices as, for example, hysteria and lesbianism in order to excavate and provide provisional names for alternative signifying practices. These not yet completely theorized modes are sources of information about the body. Without retaining the phallogocentric body then, but without wholly discarding it either for the moment, since it is the only one Western culture recognizes, we must add other signifying practices of the body to speech and writing, and we must read traditional rhetorical devices differently--not as referential only but as erotic, attractive, metonymic.

Certain experiences of women's bodies have been invisible. Similarly, aspects of the body of language can be equally overlooked or misread. In "Translating MAUVE: Reading Writing" Marlatt sums up what are for her the similarities between writing and translating. In either activity what she is doing is "sensing one's way through the sentence, through (by means of) a medium (language) that has its own currents of meaning, its own drift. So that what one ends up saying is never simply one with, but slipping, in a fine displacement of, intention" (27-28). Even as they constitute it, both body and language escape signification. When Marlatt writes about the call of feminist writers in Québec for a writing that returns us to the body and the "largely unverbalized, presyntactic, postlexical field it knows" (Touch to My Tongue 48), she clarifies that what she means by this postlexical field is the site of the erotic attraction and proliferation of words. Within a translation poetics the term 'postlexical' can be read not only as pre-existing and exceeding the limits of the dictionary. Instead of a regression toward a dubious site of origins, it can also be read as a translation, using the etymological roots of words contained in the dictionary, toward a language which no one at present speaks or writes or performs but which perhaps subsequent women writers will be able to inhabit. In the meantime, experimental feminist writers such as Marlatt translate not back to a utopian vision but within and toward a target text and target language. Marlatt and writers like her write in a (m)other tongue or 'interlanguage,' a separate, yet intermediate, linguistic system situated between a source and a target language (Toury 71).

At this point in her poetic essay, the penultimate paragraph, where the figure of a new woman writer emerges, Marlatt accretes to the problem of "the given," which she had previously used solely in a phenomenological sense, the same associations Hélène Cixous borrows from Marcel Mauss on the logic of the gift ("The Laugh of the Medusa" 252, 263-64). The given is not just that which pre-exists. It also partakes of the nature of a gift. Like Cixous's figure of the woman writer, Marlatt's "Alma," "inhabitant of language, not master, not even mistress, . . . in having is had, is held by it [language], what she is given to say. in giving it away is given herself . . . " (Touch to My Tongue 48). Alma is the writer as translator. Her writing/translating works off of "that double edge where she has always lived, between the already spoken and the unspeakable, sense and non-sense" (48). Her source language is ordinary speech and writing, but her target language is not. This is translation between the articulate (the already spoken) and the inarticulate (the unspeakable), language (sense) and the body (non-sense), the vernacular and an unknown language, the mother tongue and a (m)other tongue. Marlatt touches on a similar point when she says in an interview "okay, interface is a better word for the meeting of what is knowable & what is unknowable. So all writing is a kind of translation. . . . From that which is inarticulate but sensed, deeply sensed. . . . In translation you're always making choices because you cant get the whole, the original, in fresh" (Bowering, "Given This Body" 57). There is always excess, spillage and loss of signifiers and signifieds in translation. At the present stage in her work, the seepage inherent to translation has become an intrinsic part of Marlatt's theory of language, writing and the body.[16] The gift is, paradoxically, this seepage, this loss, this drift.

In the final paragraph of "musing with mothertongue" _topos_, "place (where we are situated)," and trope, "body (that contains us)," have coalesced again:

> language thus speaking (i.e., inhabited) relates us, "takes us back" to where we are, as it relates us to the world in a living body of verbal relations. articulation: seeing the connections (and the thighbone, and the hipbone, etc.). putting the

> living body of language together means putting the world together, the world we live in: an act of composition, an act of birthing, us, uttered and outered there in it (49).

Language speaking is language inhabited by a body. This body in turn is situated in a network of verbal relations. Marlatt's use of the terms 'speaking,' 'articulation' and 'composition' are inconclusive with regard to the differentiation between writing and speech. When she refers to language speaking, she immediately modifies that term with 'inhabited' so as to insist on the bodily incarnation and articulatory or joining function that signifying in general enacts. The root of 'inhabit,' 'ghabh,' means, among other things, to give or receive, which in the context of Marlatt's modification creates a kind of equation such that to speak is to inhabit is to give or receive. Language speaking is language inhabiting our bodies, but there is always a surplus of the given, of both body and language. Language exceeds us; there are many languages and discourses which are unheard by us. In turn, the materiality of our bodies supercedes the referentiality of language in countless ways.

Thus Marlatt's conception of the relation between the body and language is close to the idea of hysterical translation.[17] Unlike Cixous, who theorizes an alternate relation between body and language on the basis of the hysterical body, Marlatt's focus is the lesbian body. However, what is important to note in terms of the present discussion is that hysterical bodies and lesbian bodies alike disclose both the feminine erotogenic body and processes of signification in general.

Hysteria, as the name suggests, was traditionally thought of as a reorganization of the body due to the wandering or displacement upwards of the womb. Freud's theory of somatic compliance, conversion or the transposition of psychic pain into physiological symptoms superceded this view. But hysterical translation is not the translation of psychic blockage or pain into bodily symptoms. It is not the expression or imitation of madness, or of femininity. Hysterical translation is the intersemiotic translation from one signifying system to another. Hysterical translation does not represent[18] the body as ill, pathological or diseased; it presents the body as pictogram. The movements of the hysterical body are "the perceptible appearance of a signifying system or a language that plays upon the visible" (David-Ménard 20). Insofar as it marks the physiological body off from the signifying but nonverbal body (21), hysteria is an anti-metaphysic, a new epistemology, a new ontology. Ironically then, hysteria thus rethought not as the picaresque wandering of the womb nor as a dutiful somatic compliance but as a translative process along the lines of the translation between writing and speech, for example, does in fact lead to a reorganization of the body.

Therefore when Cixous, for one, posits women writers as hysteric she is not suggesting that they are afflicted with that malady. Contemporary experimental women writers do not recapitulate the gestures of hysteria as illness, nor do they valorize this sense of hysterical illness. The woman writer is not the double of the classic hysteric, because the writer writes. Inasmuch as she writes, she may draw on the philosophies posed by the hysterics. The same is true of Marlatt's tracing the significations of the lesbian body. Just as Jean Martin Charcot found hysterics to be photogenic because of their play with the language of visibility, so Marlatt explores and translates the erotogenic 'organ speech' of the bodies of lesbian lovers. The erotogenic body is the literal body, but it is not the materialist or essentialist body we have inherited from Cartesian metaphysics. The erotogenic body is located in the spaces between signifiers. Between one kiss or embrace and the next. Literally, between two mouths.

For Marlatt, then, orality is not entirely tied to speech, conversation, the vernacular, or even whole words. She differentiates within and supplements the traditional model of signification.[19] Asked in an interview about the relation of writing to speaking in her work, she responds, "I think my writing is fairly oral":

> When I'm writing, I'm writing it as I'm hearing it. . . . But, I'm not too concerned with it on the page. When I was writing verse, when I was using the space of the page, then it would get in the way of the words coming out. . . . I'm concerned with how it sounds, with how you speak it, and how it can be heard. . . . What most intrigues me is what I think of as the sound body of the work. What kinds of sounds bounce off, echo off, call up other sounds. How the rhythms elongate or slow down, or suddenly pick up and run (Williamson, "Speaking In" 29).

Marlatt focuses on the sound body of language less for the sounds of speech than for the sheerly physical sounds of language--semiotic, prelinguistic or postlexic. Although she is concerned with speaking and hearing the vernacular in her work, she is more responsive to and absorbed by the purely material element of sound.

Marlatt's concern with the sonority of words and the materiality of the body is not incompatible though with composing on the typewriter. When George Bowering remarks in "'Syntax Equals the Body Structure'" that "you can almost bypass the body when you're composing on the typewriter, that it's the brain just using part of the body to get out onto the page" (Nichol 27),[20] she objects, declaring that she does not feel that the body is not present in such compositional circumstances: "I always compose on a typewriter, and I don't feel that the body isn't there. In fact, I find that there's a kind of rush possible on the typewriter--because you can type that fast--that equates very definitely with certain body states" (27). The difference in opinion between Bowering and Marlatt on this point stems from the fact that he is working from a conventional distinction between oral and written forms, whereas she differentiates within the oral model.

Marlatt's project is to diffuse the mother tongue beyond and in excess of logocentric or patriarchal speech. Sensing her way through the sentence, she performs a bidirectional translation between the physical organs, senses and perceptions of the body and a language yet to be spoken by anyone. Moreover, by factoring in the signifying practices of bodies themselves, she diversifies orality and disperses signification, beyond the privileged organs of the phallogocentric body, over other corporeal surfaces. "Poetics," she writes, "is not a system of thought but a tactic for facing the silence" (Marlatt, "Listening In" 36). Instead of a strategy for hearing-oneself-speak, "poetics is a strategy for hearing" (38). Her poetics does not give a Hearing to the evidence of the phallogocentric self but rather to "every comma, every linebreak, each curve thought takes touching nerve-taboo, the empty space where speech, constrained by the 'right form,' the 'proper word,' is gripped (passive voice) by silence" (38). Marlatt's poetics translates between the audible and the inaudible, the visible and the invisible, speech and writing, the body and language. Poetics is not a method of composition so much as a way of translating the body, of composing and reorganizing it.

Marlatt's writing proposes that the mother tongue both is and is not our first language (which in fact is usually a father tongue spoken and transmitted to us by our mothers). She writes toward a (m)other tongue that will de-territorialize the phallogocentric body. She wants both to map other areas of the body with language and to translate the body literally into her texts. For Ezra Pound a 'periplum' was the geography "not as you would find it if you had a geography book and a map, but . . . as a coasting sailor would find it" (A B C of Reading 43-44). For Daphne Marlatt, the periplum is the body as mapped by the tongue in translation.[21] Writing this (m)other tongue is a literal and a littoral translation.

> it moves mouth to ear (nipple to mouth), the fine stream that plays in time across a page, under pressure from all there is to say, so much we start again, starting from the left, starting from the

silenced, body the words thrum. waiting to hear with all our ears. listening in, on . . . ("Listening In" 38).

V. The Promise of Translation

> The person who becomes a writer is a person who starts to notice the language itself instead of what it signifies. Language is a problem very early for the potential writer. In my own case, I can remember different stages of the problem. My parents were bilingual in English and German, but they stopped speaking German the day I was born, because they wanted me to be assimilated and totally English-speaking; they were marvellously successful--I learned no German, maybe two curse words. And there's a sense of guilt in me about that silence that my birth occasioned. Some of the kids in my own generation grew up bilingual and it mystified me completely that they had this other alien tongue. That no doubt contributed to my sense of language as a visible rather than an invisible thing (Robert Kroetsch, in Neuman and Wilson 141).

"Can we make a promise in a foreign language?" Derrida asks (Mémoires for Paul de Man 101). The unspoken question which weaves in and out of the interstices between the fragments and musings that comprise Robert Kroetsch's essay "For Play and Entrance: The Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" is the nature and status of the promise. If a given language is ours but not 'originally' or uniquely, and if it is a language imposed by, and therefore largely indistinguishable from, the language of the colonial powers which suppressed our or our neighbour's familial, ethnic, tribal, provincial, or group tongue, how do we negotiate and sign a social contract and how do we write a poetic license in this language? How do we live up to the promises of the postcolonial contract? How do we carry out a promise we made to ourselves in this language which is neither native nor foreign?

The promise, as we have seen particularly in "The rhetorical adventures of 'Don Juan' in The Sad Phoenician," is performative; it does what it says it does, even if the acts trailing in its wake are not carried out (translated) to the letter. The promise enacts the real. In addition, whether spoken or written, the promise also brings with it a performative signature effect. The signature is a synonym for 'yes.' 'Yes' has no meaning other than that it is an answer to a demand or desire of an Other. 'Yes' is the end to a monologue; even 'no' implies 'yes' in this respect since it says 'yes' to the Other even as it withholds its affirmation to a deed. 'Yes,' then, means 'yes, yes,' a double yes.[1]

When, in his essay "Unhiding the Hidden," Kroetsch quotes Heidegger's comment about the rootlessness of Western thought beginning with the Roman colonization of the Greek word without a "'corresponding, equally authentic experience of what they say, without the Greek word'" (The Lovely Treachery of Words 58), he marks out the problem of the postcolonial Canadian writer as one of translation. Kroetsch applies Heidegger's analysis of the hiatus in Western thought and experience to the Canadian situation: "But just as there was in the Latin word a concealed Greek experience, so there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience, sometimes British, sometimes American" (58). The Canadian writer's words are totally exact homonyms of those of the British, the American or the French writer (59). By working in the delay and deferral between the failure or impossibility of the Roman translation of Greek and the similar dilemma in postcolonial Canada with regard to the languages of the so-called founding nations France and Britain, translation poetics foregrounds the differences between and among languages. Unhiding the hidden, then, is translation. The radical process of rooting the borrowed word in authentic experience is translation.

Because a writer's commitment is to language itself, the problem of promising in a foreign language is very complex. In a chapter called "The Art of Translation," Timothy Brennan compares the narrative strategies of postcolonial writers Gabriel García Marquez and Salman Rushdie. In the following passage, he describes the position of the postcolonial writer with regard to the language of the colonisers:

> As he attributes his choice of form to the inheritance of European colonisation, García Marquez wilfully inverts the common neo-colonial dilemma of having to write in the language of the former colonisers. For it is not a question of a language involuntarily accepted but of an entire artistic outlook voluntarily assumed. The logic behind this new emphasis is plain. It places responsibility for

> the present on the only ones today capable of mastering the situation, instead of reliving the sins of the past. By proclaiming that his discourse derives from imperialism's early myth-makers, he envisions an influence so deep that it infuses all thought. But at the same time, the influence is their own possession, and therefore capable of being transformed for constructive purposes. The power of the former rulers is in fact diminished, for the conqueror himself has apparently been conquered by a reality which he is powerless to describe in any way other than the language of fantasy.
>
> . . .
>
> Both García Marquez and Rushdie in this way temper and subvert the routine appeals by writers of anti-colonial commitment to 'native' discourse by showing not only the inevitability but the benefits of what has been left behind. Their discourse, instead of telling a story reviling Europeans for their dishonourable past, stylistically alludes to that past and appropriates it for their own use (68-69).

Writing in the language of the colonizers García Marquez and Rushdie say 'yes' to that language. In saying 'yes,' however, they do not affirm or accept their colonisation; instead they appropriate it, art and artifact, as their own. They translate intralingually, and this act of translation says, in effect, both 'yes' and 'no' to the language and terms of the contract of colonisation.

Translation, then, is a way of promising in two languages at once. A contradiction that speaks 'yes' and 'no' in the same breath, translation redistributes the promise and the contract. Derrida, reading through the screen of Walter Benjamin's transcendental language in the essay "The Task of the Translator," does not use the kind of political language Brennan uses, but his conclusions are nonetheless similar. In the following passage, he interprets what Benjamin means by the 'language of the truth' and 'the pure language':

> Translation promises a kingdom to the reconciliation of languages. This promise, a properly symbolic event adjoining, coupling, marrying two languages like two parts of a greater whole, appeals to a language of the truth ("Sprache der Wahrheit"). Not to a language that is true, adequate to some exterior content, but to a true tongue, to a language whose truth would be referred only to itself. It would be a matter of truth as authenticity, truth of act or event which would belong to the original rather than to the translation, even if the original is already in a position of demand or debt ("Des Tours de Babel" 200).

The contract, covenant or promise of a people among themselves breached, the national language or languages swallowed, the voice and the breath taken away in the act of colonisation, there is in the failure to translate an attendant loss of authenticity of act or event. The consolation for the absences introduced by colonisation[2] is, to use a phrase particularly resonant in the Canadian postcolonial context, the accord of tongues. In translation "one language gives to another what it lacks, and gives it harmoniously, this crossing of languages assures the growth of languages . . . . This perpetual reviviscence, this constant regeneration (Fort- and Aufleben) by translation is less a revelation, revelation itself, than an annunciation, an alliance and a promise" (202). The promise is to language: that it will continue to be reborn, that it will survive. What the affinity, kinship or coupling of two or more languages aims at is "the being-language of the language, tongue or language as such, that unity without any self-identity, which makes for the fact that there are languages and that they are languages" (201). The postcolonial writer writing in the language of the coloniser is, in fact, translating. As Kroetsch predicts, "One nice thing that has happened to English is its own unravelling. I'm sure India is going to have a new version of English that will almost have to be translated" (Neuman and Wilson 119). He postulates that the oral tradition plays an important role in this intralingual translation. Through such translation, the authenticity, the truth of act or event, is restored to language or languages.

Translation, for Kroetsch, is a poetics, a method. Perhaps more than any other signifying practice, translation practices the difference, deferral and delay between signifiers. This play of *différance* is foregrounded both in Kroetsch's musings about the mother tongue and in his notes on the contemporary long poem in Canada. He metaphorizes delay and deferral as foreplay to the act of making love. Poets are compared to lovers--lovers of the Other, lovers of language. Following upon the excerpt from bpNichol's *The Martyrology*, which opens Kroetsch's essay on the long poem by translating, intralingually, the words 'purpose' and 'porpoise' and thematizing the act of writing, Kroetsch sets up the fundamental problematic of the long poem, namely, the search for a method of delay which would replace narrative, no longer a tenable method for contemporary poets:

> In love-making, in writing the long poem--delay is both--delay is both technique and content. Narrative has an elaborate grammar of delay. The poets of the twentieth century, in moving away from narrative, abandoned (some willingly, some reluctantly) their

> inherited grammar. Poets, like lovers, were driven back to the moment of creation; the question, then: not how to end, but how to begin. Not the quest for ending, but the dwelling at and in the beginning itself (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 117-18).

The length of the long poem allows for the exploration of our "disbelief in belief." The poem of the failure of system, grid, monism, cosmologies, and inherited story is the long poem. The long poem is the poem of the failure of the promises inherent in system and grid. The long poem, therefore, promises failure, and delivers on its promise, as much as a promise can ever be fulfilled. That is to say, the long poem does succeed. "The failure of language becomes its own grammar of delay" (120).

Given his metaphor of the writing of the long poem as lovemaking, it is significant that the first example Kroetsch cites of a love poem is Phyllis Webb's *Naked Poems*. In this short long poem, the lovers are lesbian, not heterosexual.[3] Of course, and Frank Davey has noted this as well, in lovemaking it is the heterosexual male who must delay orgasm, not necessarily his partner or the lesbian lover. Davey writes:

> Kroetsch argues in ["For Play and Entrance"] that this impulse to prolong is a wish to delay; in this argument he reads the energy of the long poem as sexual energy, and delay as postponement of a

> terminating orgasm. This theory, in my subjective view, has unhappy implications for the life-long poem (not to mention the life itself should it bear any close relationship to the poem), and contains at least a hint of exclusively male perspective; not surprisingly, it is linked by Kroetsch to a view of the Canadian long poem as a narrative of disappointment and failure. I simply don't see the long poem this way; for me, in Kroetsch's metaphor, it requires recurring orgasm, movement from surprise to surprise, is prolonged not only to delay but to continue, it anticipates more rather than postpones the most. Individual sections of the poem can culminate, come briefly to rest, as well as lead into new moments in the larger work. This is how I read Allophanes, Kroetsch's own Seed Catalogue, Dudek's Atlantis--as moving in the joy of continuing and varied culmination rather than in a fear of ending ("The Language of the Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" 185).

While Davey does not exactly substitute a feminine version of lovemaking, his reservations about delay are worth taking into account. If delay and deferral are not always the procedure or protocol in different versions of lovemaking, then Kroetsch's analogy between lovemaking and writing the long poem does not always hold.

The referential validity of the analogy to actual sexual technique, however, is less important than its function within the text of Kroetsch's essay. That is to provide an instance of "A method, then, and then, and then, of composition; against the 'and then' of story" (120). There is no single method for writing the contemporary Canadian long poem. Kroetsch's multiple metaphors for writing the long poem--lovemaking, fishing, archaeology, birthing, phenomenological erasure, travelling, doubling, etc.--testify to this fact.[4] The method of the long poem circumvents the fierce closure of narrative. As Kroetsch says, "The story as fragment becomes the long poem: the story becomes its own narrative; i.e., our interest is in, not story, but the act of telling the story" (120). The story has always already been told; what grips us now is the act of its telling. The story, then, is original, and the telling of it is a repetition. Kroetsch says of Fred Wah's Pictograms from the Interior of B.C. "The pictograms are a language and a story; at once, a language and a story. But we have lost the connection" (122). We have lost the code that will allow us to translate the language of the pictograms into story. Thankfully, therefore, the language cannot be overwhelmed by narrative. Instead translation can take place over and over and over without limit. We are no longer so entranced by the story; rather we are entranced, admitted, into the composition of the poem and the process of translation. Story is delayed while translation is performed jointly by writer and reader.

In the same way that translation is a method, of which a translation is the product or result, the long poem is "A method, then, and then, and then, of composition" (120), as well as the composition itself. This is not just semantic serendipity. Unlike representational aesthetics, in which the thing represented is not the thing as such but a linguistic substitute and the reader reads to decode the meaning of the substitution, the process of converting one system of signs into another in translation is the translation. Source text and target text are both texts. Process is not subordinate to product. This accounts, in part, for the frequent presence of palimpsests in long poems. The text being translated is often visible on the same or the facing page. Writer and reader collaborate in the translation. The time of writing and the time of reading may overlap.

Delay and deferral, let us not forget, are not just sexual, but temporal, procedures. As the story goes, translation came into being as a deferral of cosmology, grid, system, and tower: architects constructing the Tower of Babel arose from their beds one morning to discover their grand scheme deferred and to learn the necessity to translate. The long poem does not attempt to come full circle and return to any 'originary' translation, since the journey of the return to origins is also part of a cosmology. Both Kroetsch and Davey see the time factor of the long poem as a deflection of the old cosmologies of apocalypse and ending. The opening paragraph of Davey's essay dwells on the time of the long poem:

> The first sign we see in the long poem is its length, promising to the reader that its matter is large in depth or breadth. Its length also speaks about time--that the writer will take his [sic] time, engage time, encompass its passage. Unlike the collection of 'occasional' poems, it says that time is not a series of discrete and unique occasions, but is large, can be viewed as large, can be apprehended, measured and entered, that there is time--time at least to read a long poem. There is even in the length of the long poem an announcement of futurity--in the commitment of the poet to enter a continuing structure . . . , in the exemplary motion of line following line, page following page, section opening into section (183).

The large matter engaged by the long poem is "that there is time." More so than self-reflexivity, the 'frame' of the long poem is its length. The promise of the long poem is the promise of time. In Canada, says Kroetsch, we embrace "the nightmare and the welcome dream of Babel" (The Lovely Treachery of Words 71). Lovers, we embrace the promise and the time of translation. Translators, we say 'yes,' we sign, we authenticate our own 'true' tongue; and we say 'no,' we perpetuate the non-accord of tongues and the survival of language itself.

. . . . . .

René Descartes's valorization of reason and method as a universal language mimes the Babelian scene. He wrote his Discours de la Méthode in French, the vernacular, rather than in Latin, the 'universal' language, in order to argue that natural reason and method constitute the true universal language. As Derrida has shown, this choice was not the subversive gesture it might appear.[5] Within the French juridico-political context of the time he was writing his treatise, Descartes's act "follows the monarchist state tendency" and "the direction of power and reinforces the installation of French law" (Derrida, "Languages and Institutions of Philosophy" 104). It was in the interests of the French state to extend the usage and influence of the French language. Under the guise of making a concession toward French as the maternal tongue, the nation's subjects were moved "into the trap of their own language, as if the king were saying to them: in order to be subjects of the law--and of the king--you will finally be able to speak your French mother tongue . . . ; it is as if one gave them back to the mother in order to better subjugate them to the father" (99). However, at the same time as French was being extended, the provincial dialects were being abolished. Thus, the French language moved into the space vacated by Latin. Derrida illustrates:

> . . . to plead in favour of a dialect, as to plead any cause in justice, translation was necessary; you had to learn French. Once you had learned French, the claim of dialects, the 'maternal' reference, was destroyed. Try to explain to somebody who holds both power and the power of law that you want to preserve your language. You would have to learn his to convince him. Once you have appropriated the language of power, for reasons of rhetorical and political persuasion, once you master it well enough to try to convince or to vanquish, you are in turn vanquished in advance and convinced of being wrong. The other, the king, has demonstrated through the fact of translation, that he was right to speak his language and to impose it on you. By speaking to him in his language, you acknowledge his law and

> authority, you prove him right, you countersign the act that proves him right over you. A king is someone who is able to make you wait or take the time to learn his language to claim your rights, that is, to corroborate his (99-100).

Descartes's strategy of writing in French, in addition to securing a certain readership in the foreign courts where French was fashionable, served the interests of a pedagogy aimed, as his letters reveal, at feeble minds and women (104).

Universal reason is designed to bypass both the paternal, written language of Latin and the maternal or 'natural' spoken languages. Descartes attempts both to sever the dead hand of Latin and to excise the speaking tongue and with it corporeality in general. His manoeuvres efface writing, speech, the body, and sexual difference:

> Order, the straight and essential path, that which goes from what is less easy to what is easier, would be an intelligible order, hence 'desexed', without a body. The necessary passages in the order of demonstration (the doubt of sensible things, the I think, I am, God exists, etc.) are sexually neuter or indifferent. The cogito is related, in its thinking as in its utterance, in the grammar of its sentence, to a subject which bears no sexual mark, because it

> is a res cogitans and not a body. As always, this neutralization produces ambiguous effects. It opens up for women access to a universal community and to philosophy (which one might consider as progress); but the cost is a neutralization of sexual difference, which is now relegated to the side of the body, inessential to the act of the cogito, to intuition, to reason, to the natural light, etc. The subjectivity of the subject which is thus founded in the Cartesian movement would remain--whether it is a question of the body or of language--sexually undifferentiated. . . .
>
> . . . In this battle for the French language and against Latin and the School, the place of women is essential, at least in certain social spheres, and first of all at Court. Because they have never been taught Latin and the discipline of the School, women are supposed to have a better rapport with the mother tongue, a better feel for language. They are in short the true guardians of the vernacular (Derrida, "Languages and Institutions of Philosophy" 111-12).

Derrida suggests that the extension of natural reason to women paradoxically neutralizes sexual difference. It is to enlist women, like the common people whose dialects were being outlawed at this time, in an enterprise which erases at once their difference and their diversity among themselves. Furthermore, insofar as 'woman' represents corporeality, the desexed, nondifferentiated inclusion of women acts as a supplement to the privilege accorded the cogito at the body's expense.

On the other hand, translation, in the sense I have developed throughout this project, can only be practiced by the body. Translation, tongue tied to the signifier, can only pass through the body of the translator. A body, but not just some imaginary universal body, a body extrapolated on the basis of the idea of 'universal reason.' Not any body and every body. Translation will not pass through the 'pure,' 'universal' language of reason and its body, but only through the body's ability to write and speak in more than one language. Nor does the body succumb to 'pure language,' in Benjamin's sense of the term, any more than it does to 'pure reason.' The body translates between given languages, a mother tongue and a vernacular. Through translation the linguistic supplementarity of languages to one another enacts the promise of the growth of what Benjamin calls 'pure language,' language whose authenticity is not referred to some exterior context but only to itself.

. . . . . .

> So i bought rock 'n roll records, put away my mother's copies of Keats and Tennyson, wore white bucks and jeans and pencil-line skirts. I loved the principles of democracy as we argued them out in school, loved Canadian history with its romance of the coureurs de bois, the Metis uprising, Simon Fraser tracing rivers, Pauline Johnson and Emily Carr recording a culture as exotic as any Malay kampong's--yet here it had something to say about the plants and rocks and animals we lived and would go on living among (Daphne Marlatt, "Entering In" 221).

Whereas in their essays on the long poem Kroetsch and Davey metaphorize the writing of the long poem as the time and timing of lovemaking, Daphne Marlatt's notes on her long poem Steveston, "Long as in Time? Steveston," configure time itself as inspiration. For Marlatt as well, "the long poem takes on time, proposes an open future as it embraces a closed past, successive, linear" (316). She did not set out to write a long poem, she says, so much as to "explore the place Steveston through a lengthening line. Hearing it push time--that came first." She relates the double sense of the word 'inspire' (breathing in and breathing upon or into, outward) to taking the time for a deep breath, time to be. To inspire is to take on, and to take, time. Time is the body breathing and living in the world.

Steveston engages time in the particulars of a place, not a representative place but a particular Japanese-Canadian fishing village on the west coast of British Columbia prior to 1974. "The world I was writing was & is a world I in the company of everyone could continue to live in: creation, goes on being created as writing enacts it." Immersed in the particulars of the place and taking her time, poet and world permeate one another. Her literal breathing, her aliveness in her body and in the world, is her inspiration.[6] She positions herself, in her body, as a translator between inner and outer. Her body as translator is the pivotal point in her world and in her work.

In her recent essay on translation, Marlatt writes that "Translation has always stood in an intimate relationship to writing for me, not the same but similar to, and it is this shade of difference . . . that is exactly the area . . . that the process of translation works. . . . For me translation is about slippage and difference, not the mimesis of something solid and objectified out there" ("Translating MAUVE" 27). Translation works (in) the area of *différance*. In both writing and translation, "what one ends up saying is never simply one with, but slipping, in a fine displacement of, intention" (28). Marlatt's terms--difference, displacement, slippage--are comparable to Kroetsch's 'delay' and 'deferral' and Davey's 'prolongation.' Each points to the play of *différance* at the root of the composition of the contemporary Canadian long poem.

Différance, as we have seen, deconstructs the conventions of mimesis and representation, which typically use the body of the Other, usually woman, as a supplement. As Sherry Simon says, "Both women and translators are the 'weak' terms in their respective hierarchies, sexual and literary" (Homel and Simon 52). Thus the drift and slippage inherent in translation are important to Marlatt as a feminist writer. The doubling involved in translation--"there are two minds (each with its conscious and unconscious), two world-views, two ways of moving through two different languages" (28)--is compounded when, as in the case of Marlatt translating Nicole Brossard's MAUVE, the two writers involved are "aware of the displacement that occurs between their own experience as women and the drift that is patriarchally loaded in their language." Then, Marlatt says, you have both drift and resistance, immersion and subversion, working together. Moreover, her translation of MAUVE involves the interlingual translation of a text which is composed, in part, as an intralingual translation: "Meaning operates strangely in [MAUVE], seeping from one phrase to others around it, leaking back and forth between fragments, definitely not progressing in linear fashion." This is the translation of one interlanguage into another.

The words Marlatt uses--the excess, slippage, drift, leakage, stain, bruise, and curve of translation--reflect the effects of the bodies of the two women in translation. For Marlatt, translation takes place not only between two languages and two texts but between two mouths. The mouths of women speak of "another real and another (dorsal) mouth" (29).[7] The relationship of one mouth to another (the self and the Other, the translator and the other writer) doubles that between "the living body and its mental impress," that divergence of the body from its virtual image, especially the body of woman because it has been "much imaged." This "resistance" of the body has been analyzed by Elizabeth Grosz. As she suggests:

> The body can thus be seen not as a blank, passive page, a neutral ground of meaning, but as an active, productive, 'whiteness' that constitutes the writing surface as resistant to the imposition of any or all patterned arrangements. It has a texture, a tonus, a materiality that is an active ingredient in the messages produced. It is less like a blank, smooth, frictionless surface, a page, and more like a copperplate to be etched.

Against the Cartesian valorization of reason as a universal language which reduces the body to a symptom of the self and aligns the body-symptom with the symbolic, social order, Grosz and Marlatt view the body as 'intextuated' (Grosz) and resistant to, rather than totally compliant with, social inscriptions. This is not to suggest, however, that they set the body up as a counter-universal against 'universal reason.' Feminist writers are not simply reversing the Cartesian mind-body binary, as anti-essentialists claim. It makes no more sense to say that the body is a universal than to say that reason is. However, by factoring translation, writing, and other signifying practices through the body, instead of only through the signifying systems always already comprehended by (because constitutive of) consciousness--representation and mimesis--the body can be reinscribed and new accents heard.

The promise of translation for Marlatt is multifaceted. For feminist writers, the notion of fidelity--the fidelity of language to event in the promise, in marriage, and in translation--is problematic. Against fidelity, Marlatt posits excess, slippage, difference, leakage, and so on. Unfaithful translation, translation unfaithful to the traditional translation contract, generates the long poem. It provides a method for deconstructing the Cartesian 'universal reason' which has operated to erase her body's difference, to alienate its drives and significations, and to subject her to the Law of the Father. The liquid hydraulics of translation (leakage, seepage) supplant the mechanics of representation and mimesis.[8] Translation involves her in an intimate, dialogic relation with an Other. In the words of Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood and Nicole Brossard, "'I am already a translation by being bilingue, I am already a translation by being lesbian feminist, I am already a translation by being a woman'" (quoted by Kathy Mezei 49).

I have been arguing that translation is a method opposed to method, a kind of anti-method method. It is now possible to modify that phrase. Translation is a poetics, not a method in the Cartesian or common sense of the term, not even an anti-method.[9] Although the parallel is instructive in terms of understanding the nature and extent of their project, feminist writers are not repeating Descartes's gesture of writing in the vernacular. They do not write in some universal feminine or maternal language, nor do they seek to invent one. Furthermore, they do not write in the (m)other tongue either, since that language does not exist as a language independent unto itself and is instead an interlanguage. They write toward an Other language: the language of another body than the one Western cultures have inherited from Descartes and the language of an Other's body. Their inspiration is in the interpenetration and permeability between the particulars of the intextuated body and the lived world (which is not necessarily the 'real' world, or the world of 'real' men). Neither text nor body is the site of origins. The site of origins is endlessly displaced, though translation continues to take place. Since transcendental signifiers will not translate, the phallus translates itself out in feminist translation poetics. It no longer stands as the signifier which governs all other signifiers, organizing the body, both masculine and feminine bodies, according to its drives.

. . . . . .

> . . . or when you arrived in China in 1916 only four years old unable to speak Chinese and later in the roaring twenties when each time Grampa gambled away your boat passage so you didn't get back to Canada until 1930 languageless again with anger locked up in the immigration cells on Juan de Fuca Strait . . . (Fred Wah, "Elite 9," Waiting for Saskatchewan 69).

Fred Wah's translation poetics is connected very closely with genealogy, ethnicity, the death and absence of his father, and his memories of him. Derrida, reading Benjamin, notes that "starting from the notion of a language and its 'sur-vival' in translation" "we could have access to the notion of what life and family mean" ("Des Tours de Babel" 178). Benjamin, he notes, "does not say the task or the problem of translation. He names the subject of translation, as an indebted subject, obligated by a duty, already in the position of heir, entered as survivor in a genealogy, as survivor or agent of sur-vival" (179). By virtue of his ethnicity and the premature death of his father, Wah finds himself in this position of heir and survivor in a genealogy. In reply to Lola Lemire Tostevin's questions about tracing his ancestry back almost exclusively through his male parent, he explains that he has written far more about his father than his mother because his father died but his mother is still alive and because his father's story is more exotic. Tostevin probes to discover why he would consider the Chinese element of his background more exotic than the Swedish on his mother's side. Wah replies:

> More exotic because it's more mysterious. The story around my grandfather and father is more mysterious than the story around my mother and her parents from Sweden. That's a fairly clear story--European move to Canada, etc. . . . But my Chinese grandfather untypically married an English woman. Also when I was a kid in elementary school, we had to fill out these forms on registration day and one of the things we had to put down was our racial origin and the teacher told me to put down "Chinese." We weren't allowed then to put down "Canadian." That wasn't considered a racial origin. It's illegal now to ask for anyone's racial origin in Canada, but at that time you wrote down where your father came from. It had nothing to do with the mother (Tostevin, "'Music. Heart. Thinking.'" 43; ellipsis is Tostevin's).

Wah goes on to remind Tostevin that the last section of Waiting for Saskatchewan is called "Father/Mother Haibun," in which he "intentionally tried to engage some of the mother stuff partly as a way of exorcising this father obsession and also as a way of moving towards dealing with the mother thing because I am half Swedish." Where this has taken him, he says, is to his grandmothers, particularly the English woman who married his Chinese grandfather. He has, in his answer, in the course of talking about his female ancestors, returned to the father.

In the Canadian context, however, Wah's surname is not only the privileged signifier of the name and authority of the father. The surname 'Wah' is also a prime signifier of ethnic identity and marginalization. Having been born and raised in Canada by a Chinese father and Swedish mother, and carrying a Chinese name, Wah confesses to having little idea what race or ethnicity feel like. He says he does not know what it feels like to feel 'Chinese.' It is important to realize, though, that Wah's father tongue is not a single or unitary language. His father, born in Canada and English speaking, was sent to China at age four to be educated. Having been separated from his family and plunged into the Chinese language just after acquiring English, he remained in China until as a young man he was finally returned to Canada, no longer speaking or understanding any English. His father's radical linguistic estrangement complicates the alliance of Fred Wah's father tongue with the Lacanian 'name of the Father.' Part of the mystery of the father's story for Wah as a writer lies in the fact that his father tongue is inaccessible, foreign, other, displaced. In effect, Wah's father tongue is a mother tongue: His memories of his father--cooking Chinese food for his children, the rhythms and body movements of work in his café, the click of dominoes in games played with other Chinese men, his signature brush cut, Wah's recent investigations of the unspecific and unnamed anger he feels has to do with his father's exile from language--are similar, if not identical, to the kind of bodily experiences Julia Kristeva associates with the semiotic.

In the chapter above on his use of an estranged syntax and in "The Undersigned: Ethnicity and Signature in Fred Wah's Poetry," I have examined Wah's translations of his proper name and how translation promises to heal translation. I have analyzed how the 'father content' generates Wah's long poem Breathin' My Name with a Sigh and Waiting for Saskatchewan. In his article "Surviving the Paraph-raise," Stephen Scobie has also discussed what he calls the 'paraph-raising' operation in Wah's texts. I will not rehearse those discussions here. Suffice it to recall that, according to Jakobson's three types of translation, paraphrase is another name for intralingual translation. Wah's name functions in his texts as a cartouche allowing the son to translate in the direction of his Chinese genealogy. His father survives in the translation of their surname.

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Can we make a promise in a foreign language? No. But we can always try to translate. Contemporary Canadian long poems promise to take time, to defer endings, to delay apocalypse until that ending is rewritten and changed. But the long poem is not simply a postponement of the end of history. It is a technology for survival, for living and for living on. It is through translation that this promise of living on is carried out. If it is true that the Homeric epic poem comprised the encyclopaedia and pedagogy of the Greeks (a manual for shipbuilding, navigation, etc.), then the contemporary long poem is also an encyclopaedia for daily living. An encyclopaedia of signifying forms, the long poem translates different signifying practices (picto-ideo-phonographic writing, speech, performance, hysterical practice, photographs, pictographs, documentary materials) into one another in a process which claims authentic language for this culture and renews language itself. "We write poems, in Canada, not of the world, but to gain entrance to the world. That is our weakness and our strength," says Kroetsch. "Dare to enter. Dare to be carried away, transported" (The Lovely Treachery of Words 132):

Because it cannot be abstracted, systematized or methodized, translation can only take place by means of the body. The body compounds the difficulties of translation because the body is a site of delay, deferral and resistance. As Wah's pictogram " nv s ble/ tr ck" and its accompanying pictograph demonstrate, part of the invisible trick translation performs is, by playing with visibility and invisibility, inscription and erasure, writing and speech, to reinscribe the body in a way different from its inscription through representation, mimesis and universal reason. The long poem is an 'owner's manual'[10] for the body. Translating, the long poem composes the body Canadian.

NOTES

I. Preface: Translation as " nv s ble tr ck"

[1] My Master's thesis, written at the University of Manitoba, covers Fred Wah's work from his first book, *Lardeau*, through *Waiting for Saskatchewan*. Because this material cannot be incorporated into my Doctoral dissertation, there is an imbalance here in the extent of the discussion devoted to each of Wah, Kroetsch and Marlatt. Readers wishing to explore Wah's work further may consult George Bowering's introduction to Wah's *Loki is Buried at Smoky Creek* or Smaro Kamboureli's article, both of which are discussed here, my thesis, "Fred Wah's Grammatological Practice," or my article "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician." My "The Undersigned: Ethnicity and Signature in Fred Wah's Poetry" will be published in the summer 1990 issue of *West Coast Line*.

Wah borrows the term 'transcreation' from Samuel Taylor Coleridge. See the epigraph to *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.* and also bpNichol's "Transcreation: A Conversation with Fred Wah."

[2] Steve McCaffery's review, "Anti-Phonies," was the first important reading of Wah's *Pictograms from the Interior of B.C.*, a reading which, along with bpNichol's and McCaffery's major interviews with Wah, conditions the thinking of both Bowering and Kamboureli. McCaffery has subsequently revised and expanded this review and published it as an essay in his book *North of Intention*.

[3] She in turn is echoing those of Bowering, specifically the passage from his article which I have quoted in block quotation.

[4] Kamboureli, analyzing what a 'trans' process means for Wah, explicates the title poem of Wah's book *Among*, in which the poet professes to "tree" himself. Here is how she sees Wah positioning himself in relation to language and things:

> "Treeing" oneself is neither a magical metamorphosis nor an escape up a tree. Wah has not insinuated himself into a paradox, a relationship that does violence to the structure of the sign "tree." "Making inner" does not erase the difference between the tree and Wah. He is not assuming the *physis* of the tree. The transference of the signifier becomes possible partly through Wah's involvement in a process of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) . . . and partly through his partaking in the structuring of nature, the textuality of the world. Wah, by consciously denouncing the being-outside-of-things, contextualizes himself in nature, gaining thus an

unmediated understanding of the signification of "tree." He is situated on the interface of signifier and signified, relating to objects by contiguity" (46-47).

[5] Kristeva's use of 'transposition' may also have to do with the translation of the German Übersetzung. As Derrida remarks (in English translation), "We would be overlooking the rapport between Setzen (the posing of the position, of thesis and nomos) and Übersetzung (trans- and superposing, sur-passing and over-exposing, passing beyond position). We would hardly be translating Übersetzen by translating if we translated it to translate" (Mémoires: for Paul de Man xxiii).

In addition, as Kristeva states, her use of 'position' is Husserlian. See her explication of positionality in Revolution in Poetic Language, p. 43.

[6] Current translation theory avoids the terms 'original' and 'translation' by using the designations source language and target language (SL and TL) and source text and target text (ST and TT).

[7] Haas also states at one point during his argument for phono-graphic translation that "Modern verse is very largely 'bilingual'" (87). 'Bilingual,' that is, in terms of the two 'media' of speech and writing.

[8] It is worth noting in this regard that in his excellent article "Toward the Understanding of Translation in Psychoanalysis" Patrick Mahony describes the interaction of hysteric and linguistic practice as "intersemiotic symptomatology" (469), thus setting a precedent for retaining Jakobson's term 'intersemiotic' but broadening its interpretation. Mahony states in his introductory paragraph that "Jakobson's attempt at all-embracing categories does not take into account Freud's enormous contribution to the critique of translation" (461). He goes on to substantiate his contention that "Freud's contribution is especially outstanding with respect to Jakobson's third category of intermedium or intersemiotic translation" (467-68).

[9] In his book Orality and Literacy Ong describes the stage of secondary orality, to which we have acceded with the integration into our daily lives of the telephone, radio and television, as bearing "striking resemblances to [primary orality] in its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas. But it is essentially a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print, which

are essential for the manufacture and operation of the equipment and for its use as well" (*Orality and Literacy* 136). In this book at least, Ong does not consider the computer in terms of secondary orality. His concern is to preserve what he calls "the original spoken word" (81), and he reads chirographic, print and electronic transformations all as ways of technologizing that original spoken word.

See pp. 135-38 of *Orality and Literacy* for elaboration on secondary orality. See also Dennis Cooley's essays "Placing the Vernacular: The Eye and the Ear in Saskatchewan Poetry" and "The Vernacular Muse in Prairie Poetry." Cooley relies in significant measure upon Ong's distinction between orality and literacy in these two essays. In the first chapter of part III, my section on Robert Kroetsch, "The pub as poem, the poem as hubbub," I discuss Cooley's binary mapping of the models of speech and writing onto contemporary Canadian poetry.

[10] In one of her articles on the position of 'woman' in Derrida's vocabulary, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak suggests that "In the light of Derrida's work, and of Derridian criticism, it is not difficult to understand that traditional phallocentric discourse is marked by, even as it is produced, 'the name of man'" ("Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle" 26). Spivak connects Derrida's critique of propriation through the disclosure of "the fractured alterity of the scene of reading and writing" (29) as his articulation of a certain '(non)name of woman' (26). Thus Ong's resistance to grammatology and to the work of those others, along with Derrida, whom he regards as "textualists" can be seen as a resistance, in the name of the Father and of man, to the scene of reading and writing. Moreover, as Spivak notes, both the resistance to Derrida's work and its eager reception by prominent adherents have been marked by the failure to take up his renaming the operation of philosophy with the 'name' of woman (35).

[11] Speaking in an interview about the course of his career as a philosopher Derrida remarks that he feels as if he has been involved in a twenty-year detour in order to get back to something that literature accommodates more easily than philosophy, a kind of writing that one cannot appropriate, that somehow marks you without belonging to you and that appears only to others, never to you. He says:

> It's fatal to dream of inventing a language or a song which would be yours--not the attributes of an "ego," but rather, the accentuated flourish, that is, the musical flourish of your own most unreadable history.

> I'm not speaking about a style, but of an intersection of singularities, of manners of living, voices, writing, of what you carry with you, what you can never leave behind. What I write resembles, by my account, a dotted outline of a book to be written, in what I call--at least for me--the "old new language," the most archaic and the newest, unheard of, and thereby at present unreadable (Wood and Bernasconi 73).

[12] Even as we note the striking similarities between deconstruction and translation we must also take under advisement Derrida's caution to his Japanese friend (the topic of Derrida's letter is the translation of his term 'deconstruction' into the Japanese language) that "All sentences of the type 'deconstruction is X' or 'deconstruction is not X' a priori miss the point, which is to say that they are at least false. As you know, one of the principal things at stake in what is called in my texts 'deconstruction' is precisely the delimiting of ontology and above all of the third person present indicative: S is P" ("Letter to a Japanese Friend" 4). It is interesting that even as Derrida proscribes the conditions under which a statement such as mine that "to deconstruct is, in part, to translate" ought to occur, he alludes, in a letter about translation, to the intralingual translation of the copula verb. He delimits the possibility for the word 'deconstruction' to be translated, within a single language (French, English, Japanese, etc.), into any other word. However, my purpose in pointing to the similarities between translation and deconstruction is not to reduce either term to the other but simply to alert the reader to the fact that in places where one is staged the other may also be operant. Translation has deconstructive potential, as translators' prefaces have always lamenced.

It is worth noting that Ernest Fenollosa also had reservations about the copula verb in the English language. For him the reliance upon the copula "is an ultimate weakness of language. It has come from generalising all intransitive words into one" (15). See especially pp. 15 and 26 in "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry."

[13] This is Ong's position exactly. Ong posits writing as it occurs in both manuscript and print culture as a technique or a technologization of the otherwise unmediated presence of the word.

[14] In the following passage, for example, Derrida raises a number of provocative questions with regard to the limits of current translation theory:

> . . . all too often [such theories] treat the passing from one language to another and do not sufficiently consider the possibility for languages to be implicated more than two in a text. How is a text written in several languages at a time to be translated? How is the effect of plurality to be "rendered"? And what of translating with several languages at a time, will that be called translating ("Des Tours de Babel" 171)?

II. Fred Wah's Syntax: A Genealogy, A Translation

* This chapter was published in an earlier version in a special Canadian issue of the journal Sagetrieb.

[1] This quotation is from a review by Wah of a book of poems by Leslie Scalapino (9), but it applies equally to Wah's own work.

[2] I discuss Bowering's and Kamboureli's articles on Wah at some length in the Preface.

[3] It is essential to my argument--that the father's presence was marked in the body of Wah's work at the level of ~~syntax~~ prior to its emergence as content--that I focus in this paper on the earlier work.

[4] The term is Viktor Shklovsky's. See Wah's interpretation of his own work in his article "Making Strange Poetics."

[5] See my article "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician." For amplification about the phenomenon of inner speech, see Vygotsky, Vološinov and Sokolov.

[6] Picto-ideo-phonographic writing is a double- or triple-valued writing, simultaneously graphic and rhetorical, non-verbal and verbal, which restores speech to a more balanced relation with such non-phonetic elements as the pictograph and the ideograph. This writing practice mimes the picto-ideo-phonographic inscriptions of non-logocentric cultures in order to subvert the metaphysics of presence and logocentrism. For more on picto-ideo-phonographic writing, see Derrida, Of Grammatology 87-93 and Ulmer 98-100.

[7] There is a risk in describing the techniques I will be highlighting in Wah's work as a 'Chinese-ing' of

English. Parataxis, for example, is not restricted to the Chinese language. It is a difficult argument to make, especially for a non-sinologist, but comparisons between the structures of Chinese and Wah's English syntax can be made.

[8] Again, I refer the reader to my article "Fred Wah: Poet as Theor(h)et(or)ician" and to bpNichol's interview with Wah for a discussion of Wah's use of the middle voice.

III. Robert Kroetsch's Poetry:

The Translative Act as a Medium for Poetry

1. The pub as poem, the poem as hubbub

[1] It is important to remember that for some poets and some communities these manoeuvers of appropriation and conversion, if that is indeed what they are, sometimes also cross language boundaries in the transition between oral and written economies.

[2] There are a multiplicity of possible responses to the past available to a second generation. In the first place, one has to remember that the past is never completely abandoned at the birth of the second generation. For instance, one local prairie inhabitant, Shirley Neuman, tells me that even she has washed clothes on scrub boards and heated water and heavy irons on wood stoves. Prairie museums do not inspire her with gratitude at our escape from those living conditions. She resolutely avoids them out of anger at their 'romancing' of parts of our lives.

Too, my remarks in this paragraph are no doubt coloured by my experience recently of visiting the Swan River and District Museum with my parents, Vera and Sinclair Banting. While touring the museum displays, I gradually became astonished because my parents recognized and had known many of the people represented in the old photographs and documents. Even I, thirty-seven years younger than my father, had known a few of them. The three of us spent the afternoon talking, telling stories, laughing and taking turns posing for photographs behind the bodies of mannequins dressed in clothes from the turn of the century. My dad even posed behind a woman's costume, blending gender along with past and present. Mom and I posed together in a double desk as if we had been schoolgirls together.

It may be that, to a degree, prairie history (or rural history) undoes the traditional ideas of history and museum. Our parodic afternoon spent in the museum did not engulf us in waves of nostalgia, naiveté or prairie romance. Nor is parody incompatible with a respect for the past. Read Linda Hutcheon if you don't believe me.

[3] The figure of the doppelgänger is a version of self-reflexivity.

[4] My politics may simply be more populist than those of Davey and hence a source for our differences on many of the points I am raising.

[5] In my own hometown, where my parents still live, private satellite dishes carrying American television programs preceded by several years access for all to a town water system. A small library was installed there within the past year. If I were to write a poem about the day, just over a year ago, my mother first washed a load of clothes without rust in the water and with water pressure to bring the water into the machine, would I be regarded as nostalgically recalling a by-gone era? Would this poem be less respectable than a poem I might write about some urban experience which took place also about a year ago? Would it matter whether I wrote this poem before or after completing my Ph.D.? What if I framed the poem with some self-conscious device that hindered my parents from reading it or made them wonder why I was present in the narrative when I was not there at the time the tap was turned on?

[6] There may be a sense in which Cooley's quarrel with Saskatchewan poet Anne Szumigalski informs his biased use of personal pronouns in this essay. This is confirmed on page 14 of his article, the very point at which he finally says boldly that "eye" poems tend to be written by women and "ear" poems by men. Three sentences following this remark, Szumigalski's name appears. However, to take Szumigalski on in this veiled way, if that is what he is doing, nonetheless excludes, falsely categorizes and diminishes the work of many other women poets for the sake of a tart response to one woman poet. Moreover, the fact that women are largely absent from "The Vernacular Muse," as the title of that article suggests (note that Cooley chose to give this name to his book too), underscores that Cooley means what he says about female poets.

[7] He writes: "I would hazard two other generalizations: for obvious enough reasons vernacular writing often comes from younger writers and native-born

writers, iconic work from older writers and immigrant writers." He then cites two examples which, he argues, fit his generalizations, followed by Pat Lane, a male poet whose work would contradict Cooley's scheme, and a female poet, Lorna Crozier, "who hang[s] around both yards" (14).

[8] It is worth noting that Gary Hyland's poem, "Power Steering," is quoted in full, while only an excerpt from Elizabeth Allen's "transplant" is reproduced. Both poem and excerpt are quoted twice within the article.

[9] In "The Vernacular Muse" Cooley, through Ong, acknowledges a difference in the volume and volubility of men's and women's voices. In Cooley's footnote number 25, he writes: "The world of high orality, as Ong reminds us, traditionally (but not now, not in an age of electronic amplification that shines into our homes intimate with tête-à-têtes) falls to male dominance for a number of reasons, one of them simple and physiological--the greater volume of sound males normally can muster in public assembly" (216). Cooley concedes, along with Ong, both here and in another passage that women's tendency to be less oral or less oratorical has, however, put them in a good position to write novels (184).

[10] At least, we do not write in the male vernacular, nor do we always write for the male ear.

[11] It must be noted that Dennis Cooley's practice and by extension the editorial decisions of Turnstone Press are far more fair and enlightened toward women's poetry than either of Cooley's essays might lead one to think. Books by Kristjana Gunnars, Audrey Poetker, Di Brandt, Jan Horner, Lorna Crozier, Daphne Marlatt, and Janice Williamson, to name a few, have been or will be published by that Press, of which Cooley is one of the editors.

In a strange way Cooley gestures toward both aligning his project with feminism and, as already discussed, setting aside women's poetry. In "The Vernacular Muse," talking about various marginalized discourses, he says "I am here arguing for the third position--that of redoing the discourse--as are numerous feminists" (184). Cooley quotes Josephine Donovan on women and the novel in order to acknowledge that, historically, women as cultural outsiders were in a "good position" to write novels in the vernacular without fear of critical censure. Unfortunately, he does not question why women could write novels in vernacular but not poetry--then or now. Intentional or not, this is another way in which Cooley exiles women not only from vernacular poetry but from poetry in general.

The list of the names of ten prairie poets in his next paragraph includes those of two women--Lorna Crozier and Kate Bitney.

[12] In his two essays Cooley makes use of Antony Easthope's excellent book Poetry as Discourse (1983) to lend support to his arguments. In 1986 Easthope published another book, What a Man's Gotta Do: The Masculine Myth in Popular Culture, in which he reads various "texts" of popular culture as portraying relationships between men as homosocial. In light of Cooley's assignations of the organs of the eye and the ear, it is interesting to compare Easthope's remarks, for instance, that the masculine body is to be observed and approved by the eye of the father and not by the eye of desire. The masculine body shuns the look of desire. Writing about a photograph of male sprinters just exiting their starting blocks, Easthope observes:

> The hardness and tension of the body strives to present it as wholly masculine, to exclude all curves and hollows and be only straight lines and flat planes. It would really like to be a cubist painting. Or whatever. But above all not desirable to other men because it is so definitely not soft and feminine; hairy if need be, but not smooth; bone and muscle, not flesh and blood. The masculine body seeks to be Rambo, not Rimbaud.
>
> . . . . Defying gravity in the high jump or the pole vault, puffing itself up like a bullfrog in the weightlifting, the masculine body can impersonate the phallus (54).

It would appear that, on the contrary, Cooley's male poet, or his alter-ego (perhaps I should simply say his 'buddy') personified as the power-turning but physically deficient 'Scrawny' who does not defy but utilizes the forces of gravity to connect physically with a woman, does desire to be both Rambo and Rimbaud. The prostheses of the car and the sorta knob dealie on the steering wheel permit even the poet to get the girl.

Cooley is careful to stipulate that female "eye" poets gaze with the look of authority normally associated with the Law of the Father and not with the eye of female desire.

[13] See pp. 195-96 of "The Vernacular Muse" for Cooley's summary. See chapter 3, "Some Psychodynamics of Orality," of Ong's Orality and Literacy for a discussion of primary orality and chapter 5, "Print, Space and Closure," especially pp. 135-38, where he briefly describes secondary orality.

[14] "Such writing is postmodern," Cooley concludes (213).

[15] Here is a brief catalogue of a few of the terms taken from a general postmodernist aesthetic which Cooley applies to a discussion of Kroetsch's poetry: lays claim to, in defiance of / defence against, already made, exploding, ostentatiously entering it, to play with texts, to play the fool, to laugh, lifts material, elevates it, promotes it, steals it, appropriations, confiscation, opening a field, incorporates, the criss-crossing of myriad styles, dance, preposterous collisions, violates, breaches other literary etiquette, carnival of noise and residual orality, indifference to plagiarism, and erodes the sanctity of private enterprise. All of these words and phrases occur within a page and a half (198-99).

[16] It is to Cooley's credit that in his critical excursion into the language of Seed Catalogue he avoids configuring the sensual richness of fruits and vegetables, and language, in terms of a single gender, at least up to the point where, replying to the real or imaginary woman who would censor such vegetable love he retorts "He speaks of country matters, madam" (202).

[17] Kathie Kolybaba, reviewing Cooley's long poem, Bloody Jack, also addresses him personally and takes him to task for what she calls a "violent" version of postmodern writing which leaves no room for women readers. She contends that "there's no room for women here, or for the reader: we can be pussies or ladies in bed . . . " (43). In an interview with Daniel Lenoski, Cooley confesses to being "bewildered" and "astonished" by this comment in her review (Lenoski 170-71).

[18] See Cooley's "demurral" on pp. 76-77 of his article on "Recursions Excursions and Incursions: Daphne Marlatt Wrestles with the Angel Language." This single paragraph interrupts his discussion of Marlatt's work in order to argue that "It doesn't do simply to designate one kind of writing--abstract, discursive, logical, grammatical . . . as a 'male' enterprise. It may not be altogether satisfactory to decide too quickly that certain kinds of writing are exclusively 'female' either." This might seem like a qualification, if not a retraction, of his earlier dichotomy between male ear and female eye poets. However, in the next sentence following he attributes the gender mapping of poetic styles to feminism and specifically to Marlatt's own texts. Here again he is concerned to protect male postmodern poets: "It's hard to think, say, of male postmodern poets, to name only one group, themselves criticized by linguistic standard bearers, as either enforcers or beneficiaries of this

'male' discourse." He then laments feminists' lack of precision in setting up such gender oppositions in terms of writing style (76). It might be possible to read Cooley's essay on Marlatt as a reply to the critics of his essays on the vernacular muse (including the possibility of the present discussion) and of Bloody Jack and as an attempt at a vindication of the rights of the poet to write within various contradictions, as he is himself aware of doing. See footnote 22 to his article on "Breaking & Entering (Thoughts on Line Breaks)" (135).

2. The (Rosetta) stone hammer

[1] As George Bowering notes, "So far he has told us what colour the object is, but he has not mentioned a colour" (132). See Bowering's brilliant word-by-word analysis, almost a translation itself, of "Stone Hammer Poem." See also Russell Brown's essay, "Seeds and Stones: Unhiding in Kroetsch's Poetry," which treats "Stone Hammer Poem" at some length.

[2] Bowering states that the first section of "Stone Hammer Poem" "is a western Canadian reconstruction of Keats's ode on an old urn; an act that Keats's poem suggested someone meditate and perform. We infer a succession all the way from sylvan historian to Prairie archaeologist, a code transmitted from ditty to Dawe" (133).

[3] At the time of writing "For Play and Entrance" Kroetsch's continuing poem was titled Field Notes. It is now called Completed Field Notes.

[4] In a recent interview with Roy Miki, Kroetsch says: "I was tempted at one point to frame the whole poem with Indian material, to open with 'Stone Hammer Poem' and to end with those Old Man stories which I--how many are there, I forget. Are there twelve?" ("Self on Self" 126). He confesses that this secret ending that he had had up his sleeve failed. This failure of ending and of poem, of course, is part of Kroetsch's aesthetics of failure, in this case the failure of the postmodern poet to write the epic poem. Ironically, it was in part "Stone Hammer Poem," the prologue to the continuing poem, that threw out the count in terms of epic numbers. Miki suggests that after The Ledger and Seed Catalogue Kroetsch might have ended his long poem. Kroetsch replies: "No, I think I pretty quickly recognized that I couldn't stop then--given my epic impulse I had to go for 12 at least. I've gone past 12, so now I'm hoping that at 24 I can quit, and that my continuing poem is going to cease at section 24. But

there's a prologue that is, or is not, counted into the counting. So then you start to play that little trick on yourself" (126).

[5] Bowering describes the raspberry basket as "a little museum" (143). This transference of the stone hammer from the museum to the poet's desk lends symbolic credence to my argument that the stone is a Rosetta stone, a key to translation.

[6] Perhaps an additional meaning of the word 'translation,' namely, 'carried into heaven without death,' was suggested when the stone hammer first stopped the plow in the field, inspiring a "Gott im Himmel" (58).

3. The archaeology of the alphabet in The Sad Phoenician

[1] The McClelland and Stewart edition of Completed Field Notes, which merely produces a lower-case letter in parentheses above the stanza it initiates, does not at all do justice to The Sad Phoenician as long poem. I am therefore using the Coach House Press edition of the poem, designed by Glenn Goluska. Readers may also consult Field Notes: The Collected Poetry of Robert Kroetsch, which reproduces each of the letters of the alphabet above the appropriate stanza.

[2] See my discussion later in this chapter of Gérard Genette on the relation in rhetorical figures of signifier to signified.

[3] In Gregory L. Ulmer's reading of Derrida, decomposition is defined as deconstruction extended from a mode of criticism to a mode of composition (Ulmer 59).

[4] It is worth noting too that the notion of fidelity/infidelity of translation is built into the structure of alphabetic writing in an interesting paradox: infidelity to the voice and to a single language produces higher fidelity of translation than fidelity to the voice. I will have more to say about fidelity and translation in the chapter on "The rhetorical adventures of 'Don Juan' in The Sad Phoenician."

[5] I will have more to say about the sadness of the poet as lover in the following chapter.

[6] To the audience who first heard them, Homer's texts were not literary classics. They were, in part, manuals on how to live and work and 'be' in the world. They were

oral-formulaic encyclopaedias on sailing ships, military strategies, etc. See Eric Havelock's Preface to Plato.

[7] The first edition of Seed Catalogue was designed by Eva Fritsch.

[8] I borrow the term "reoralization" from George Quasha's article "DiaLogos: Between the Written and the Oral in Contemporary Poetry."

[9] 'Translation equivalence' is an important term in translation theory. Catford distinguishes between textual equivalence and formal correspondence as follows:

> A textual equivalent is any TL text or portion of text which is observed on a particular occasion . . . to be the equivalent of a given SL text or portion of text. A formal correspondent, on the other hand, is any TL category (unit, class, structure, element of structure, etc.) which can be said to occupy, as nearly as possible, the 'same' place in the 'economy' of the TL as the given SL category occupies in the SL. . . .
>
> A textual translation equivalent, then, is any TL form (text or portion of text) which is observed to be the equivalent of a given SL form (text or portion of text) (27).

See also Gideon Toury's book in which he reconsiders this traditional notion of translation equivalence and offers a functional-relational model of equivalence (63-70).

[10] This reoralization of the archive is comparable, but in reverse, to the phenomenon which takes place when, for example, high classical Greek texts are translated into a modern literate language such as English. Eric A. Havelock demonstrates that a comparison of the target and source texts reveals "the dynamics of the oral tongue and what has happened in the transfer to a literate syntax" (The Muse Learns to Write 95). Havelock's examples are strikingly reminiscent of Ernest Fenollosa's examples comparing the structure and expressive potential of the Chinese language to that of English in "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry." It seems as if the process of translation precipitates out, creates an excess, a residue, a supplement, at the border between texts and languages and between the oral and the written.

[11] George Bowering describes the act of reading a seed catalogue as if that book were a pictographic text: "A reader looks forward to the arrival of the seeds, and then to the growing of the seeds. First he will hope that the plants will look like the pictures; then he will forget

the pictures because the plants are here" ("Stone Hammer Narrative" 131).

[12] See one of Kroetsch's poems about lovemaking, "Conservative Streak," where the following lines describe the act of penetration: "(my/ poet's metaphor neatly/ inserted like a weasel's whiskers" (Seed Catalogue 43).

[13] Fred Wah does not worry about exact translation equivalence between pictographs and pictograms (poems) in Pictograms from the Interior of B.C. As he says, "I would often find myself in a large panel with lots of figures and I would select, I would find myself focusing in on certain parts of the panel and selecting out of it particular figures" (Nichol, "Transcreation" 36).

[14] Mixed scripts contain some combination of phonological signs, ideograms, determinatives (which do not represent anything pronounceable but simply indicate to what semantic category a neighboring word belongs), and pictograms. See Barber, p. 8.

[15] These methodologies are also culled from Barber's Archaeological Decipherment.

[16] Here is Kroetsch's interpretation of Fred Wah's Pictograms from the Interior of B.C., a text whose method of "transcreation" between pictographic drawings and poems is comparable to the translation between writing and speech in The Sad Phoenician: "The pictograms are a language and a story; at once, a language and a story. But we have lost the connection. Wah, desperately, reading the traces, trying to leap the gaps (signifier to signified), trying to un-name the silence back to name . . . . The poet as (inspired? shamanistic? mad?)/ archaeologist" (The Lovely Treachery of Words 122-23). I would disagree with Kroetsch's suggestions that Wah is "desperately" trying to traverse the gap between signifier and signified. However, it is important to note that Kroetsch explicitly describes a text with such a structure as creating the poet as archaeologist.

[17] Genette's theory that modern literature rejects rhetoric but retains its idea of literature as two languages within a single language compares with Haas's comment, quoted in the notes to the Preface, that "Modern verse is very largely 'bilingual'" in terms of speech and writing (Haas 87).

4. The rhetorical adventures of 'Don Juan' in The Sad Phoenician

[1] This emphasis upon the problem of belief relates to Kroetsch's contention, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that as Canadians we see ourselves as new people, but we do not believe what we see. If the task of the Canadian writer as translator is to induce belief, then is this task to seduce us as readers? If so, by what means? By laying bare the spectre of a pure Canadian language, or by inducting us into a post-Babelian condition? Are we, in addition to the women in the poem, in any sense the desired Other whose language the Sad Phoenician longs for?

[2] I am not confusing the translation poetics of Robert Kroetsch with those of the Sad Phoenician, nor am I necessarily drawing a strict line between them either. Although, as Shirley Neuman correctly notes, one must distinguish the poet IN the poem and the poet OF the poem ("Allow Self" 114), the fact that as all this performative action is taking place on the right-hand pages, the letters of the alphabet are performing their own sequential if arbitrary and somewhat indeterminate translation on the left, and translating the text on the right as well, suggests that there are corresponding translations IN and OF the poem. In this respect, the poets IN and OF the poem collaborate on a shared project. Moreover, Kroetsch himself in dialogue with Kamboureli about The Sad Phoenician switches between the first- and third-person pronouns in responding to her questions about the character of the Sad Phoenician (51). He also evades this same identification (50).

[3] (1) Verdicts: speech acts that constitute the exercise of judgment (condemning, acquitting, estimating, evaluating, etc.).

(2) Orders: speech acts that constitute assertions of authority or the exercise of power (commanding, giving an order, naming, advising, pardoning, etc.).

(3) Commitments: speech acts that consist in the assumption of an engagement with respect to a future action (promising, contracting, espousing, enrolling, swearing, betting, etc.).

(4) Behaviors: speech acts linked to a social posture (congratulating, apologizing, greeting, etc.).

(5) Expositions: speech acts that consist in a discursive clarification (affirming, denying, questioning, asking, remarking, etc.) (Felman 19).

[4] See "What Is an Author?" by Michel Foucault and "The Death of the Author" by Roland Barthes.

[5] Travelling from sea to 'c,' or sea to sea, may be the archetypal journey for the Sad Phoenician as Canadian poet. Ironically, journeying 'from sea to sea' in Canada means sailing across not oceans but miles and miles of dry land.

See also Kroetsch's poem "Mile Zero" (and the history of its composition) in The Stone Hammer Poems and Advice to My Friends. It is reprinted in Completed Field Notes.

[6] This is not the case with Inuit girls from certain groups living in the Arctic, for example, who use their story-knives simultaneously to narrate a series of events and to draw and erase accompanying pictures of them in the sand.

[7] This is one factor, their lack of alphabetic 'economy,' that has lead to the dismissal of pictograms as efficient writing systems and their consequent relegation to the category of the primitive.

[8] For example, Benveniste's exclusion of the cliché from the category of the performative is a reflection of literate, alphabetic thinking. In an oral-formulaic system, the cliché, or more accurately the formula, is a mnemonic device and fundamental archive. See Walter Ong's book Orality and Literacy.

[9] This difference in the act of self-enunciation in speaking subjects operating within different inscriptive systems opens up a number of largely unanswerable questions. What, for example, is the structure of the promise and the contract in the various systems? How without knowing the spoken language can we theorize the role and significance of the utterance in terms of a pictogrammic system? What is the relation between speaking and writing in a pictogrammic system? Is the notion of the performative a supplement to a phonetic system which requires certain signifying capacities lacking in it?

[10] There is some danger here that I too am applying standards of writing based on alphabetic consciousness to a pictogrammic writing practice, but the risk is worth taking in order to posit an alternate way of conceiving the relation among picto-, ideo- and phonographic writing.

[11] In Neuman's article the figure of the Dear Reader also includes the poet, as we shall see. In the same way that, as Kroetsch says, "saying I is a wonderful release from I" (Neuman and Wilson 209) writing I frees one from the authorial position into a blurred positionality as both writer and reader of the text, a blur impossible in the speech act. Saying I is a temporal escape from the

self, a slippage of the self between one moment and the next, between one sound and another, or between sound and silence. The act of writing *I*, because it doubles the author in this way as both writer and reader, is a temporal escape as well as an escape into the visual, spatial, tactile, audible, and labial materiality of the signifier. Kroetsch's stance with regard to the pronoun which designates the autobiographical act is clearly anti-humanist (209), anti-logocentric.

See also Neuman's "Allow Self, Portraying Self: Autobiography in *Field Notes*" and Susan Rudy Dorscht's "On Sending Yourself: Kroetsch and the New Autobiography."

[12] Neuman also mentions the notational contributions to Kroetsch's poems of the figures of his mother and his daughters.

[13] Recall Kroetsch's statement that Canadian literature "comes compulsively to a genealogy that refuses origin, to a genealogy that speaks instead, and anxiously, and with a generous reticence, the nightmare and the welcome dream of Babel" (*The Lovely Treachery of Words* 71).

[14] Neuman concludes her article "Allow Self, Portraying Self" as follows: "Kroetsch has also moved from the convention of the poem as *speech* utterance which he used in "How I Joined the Seal Herd," and in "The Sad Phoenician" and "The Silent Poet Sequence" to the idea of the poem as inter*text* in "Mile Zero" and "Delphi." That is to take the speech act of talking about oneself and to discover for it one set of writing conventions, to move towards autobio*graphy*" (120). I am arguing that in *The Sad Phoenician* too Kroetsch is negotiating the nature of the relation between speech and writing and using the differences between the two economies out of which to translate his poem.

[15] I read the dedication not simply as an extratextual 'personal' note but as part of the language of the text as well. Incidentally, Smaro Kamboureli has written a long poem, *in the second person*, about her experience of living on the border between languages.

[16] This liberation into the Otherness of language itself may be akin to Walter Benjamin's sense of translation as leading to pure language.

IV. "A new alphabet / gasps for air": Daphne Marlatt's Translation Poetics

1. Unlimited Inc.orporation

[1] In addition to Wah, Kroetsch and Marlatt, other writers who work out of a poetics of translation between and among different signifying systems include Nicole Brossard, Gail Scott, Smaro Kamboureli, Lola Lemire Tostevin, George Bowering, bpNichol, Frank Davey, Douglas Barbour and Stephen Scobie, Andrew Suknaski, and various poets publishing with Underwhich Editions.

[2] The English term 'filiation' refers, somewhat vaguely, to "the condition or fact of being the child of a certain parent." The word's use in law is more specific. In law, 'filiation' is "the assignment of paternity to someone, as a bastard child." It is perhaps needless to add that the verb 'filiate' derives from a Medieval Latin term meaning "to acknowledge as a son."

It is worth noting too that the third meaning of the word set down in the 1971 edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* is "the act or fact of forming a new branch, as of a society or language group; expansion or division." The act of forming a new branch of a language group is precisely what I am arguing Marlatt is engaged in in her poetry and poetics.

[3] Actually, as I am attempting to show here, Tostevin's charge is more generic than specific to Marlatt.

Further to the question of essentialism in feminist theory, see Diana Fuss's *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. Fuss skillfully demonstrates how both essentialist and anti-essentialist positions are productively contaminated by and dependent upon the opposite view.

[4] Because I am arguing that neither text nor body precedes the other or functions as the original of the other, I place the term 'original' in quotation marks.

[5] It is not my wish simply to point out the logical inconsistencies in Tostevin's, Moi's and Stanton's work and to insist in turn, as each of them does, that these impure elements be discarded. My own project of theorizing a poetics of translation between writing and speech traffics at the edge between the two economies and risks regressing in the direction of logocentrism or toward a kind of artificial synthesis as of binary opposites. However, I think that to call for increased attention to the physics of textual work is not to reject

the value of the work performed by these three critics either. My point is that if we are in the process of moving between systems, between modernism and postmodernism, rhetorical and poststructuralist interpretations, that we need to rethink not only such questions as binary oppositions, questions of origin, essentialism, biological determinism, and so on. We must also rethink our aesthetic, rhetorical and critical practices as well. It is not sufficient simply to spot synonyms for 'origin' or 'body.' We must simultaneously rethink the whole system.

Adrienne Rich, in an essay about how women writers and critics have a responsibility to take race, sexuality and class into account, urges that "We need to support each other in rejecting the limitations of a tradition--a manner of reading, of speaking, of writing, of criticizing--which was never really designed to include us at all" (95).

[6] Tostevin's strictures and the demands she attempts to place upon Marlatt's texts are a demand for purity, logical purity in this case. Whenever the cry for purity arises, however, one must ask exactly what it is that, by contrast, is deemed unpure. In the context of Tostevin's argument, the phrase "the Space That Is Her Mother's Face" figures as a synedoche for the mother's body.

[7] Dennis Cooley's article, "Recursions Excursions and Incursions: Daphne Marlatt Wrestles with the Angel Language," in the same issue of Line as Tostevin's piece, does perform a close reading of important aspects of Marlatt's use of language. Similarly alert to the apparently contradictory streams in her work, Cooley reconciles the contradiction first by accepting that "[Marlatt] wants to write this way . . . and she chooses to do so for good reasons" (71) and then by considering some of these reasons. For example, he finds that Marlatt's writing "derives from a phenomenological and not particularly from a structuralist or poststructuralist base" (71). Cooley casts Marlatt's fascination with etymology as combining "her interest in origins and in reflexive writing within a system. 'They announce further an engagement in a textual world, and not in any way direct or raw experience, the dictionary presiding over them" (72).

[8] For amplification about the proper name effect see Derrida's Signéponge/Signsponge, especially pp. 24-36, and The Ear of the Other pp. 50-53, 76-77. See also Jonathan Culler's On Deconstruction pp. 192-94 and Gregory L. Ulmer's Applied Grammatology pp. 63-67. And see the earlier chapter of this dissertation on Fred Wah's syntax

as a translation of his proper name and genealogy.

2. Writing under embrasure: How Hug a Stone

[1] Laurie Ricou spotted "the word moth which flies within mother, 'moththe, math-, worm" (214-15). He concludes his article "Phyllis Webb, Daphne Marlatt and simultitude" with the statement that "Marlatt is convincing. Following her etymologies does uncover a women's experience lost or hidden in the language. But then reading the moth in mother, reading the moth's womanness is uncomfortably like any other ingenious overreading" (215).

Frank Davey takes exception to what he reads as Marlatt's use of "the phonological similarity of moth and mother" to point to "a male attempt to collect the woman" ("Words and Stones" 42).

[2] In her article "'Body I': Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics," Barbara Godard notes that "The self explodes in How Hug a Stone, through the exploration of the limits of language with other modes of communication; visual (maps, inscribed and signed by the speaker) and aural (the puns on old English words)" (493). I would add the son's gesture of taping the sounds of the telephone and his mother recording his act in her long poem.

[3] See Davey's article, "Words and Stones in How Hug a Stone," especially pages 45-46.

The passage Davey finds particularly problematical, namely, "how hug a stone (mother) except nose in to lithic fold, the old slow pulse beyond word become, under flesh, mutter of stone, stane, stei-ing power" (75), finds an echo in Touch to My Tongue where Marlatt images driving east through the mountains as "alone nosing my way into the unnamed female folds of hill" (Touch to My Tongue 25).

3. Translating the body: Touch to My Tongue

[1] Daphne Marlatt: "Well, we each get to play the daughter and we each get to play the mother. . . . That's why there is so much mother/daughter imagery running through Touch, and the confusion between Persephone and Demeter is a deliberate confusion" (Williamson, "Speaking In" 26; ellipsis is Williamson's).

[2] As Marlatt says, "For instance, if I talk about our sexuality as a hidden ground, then I have to make a distinction between ground that is laid out, gridded, cleared for use, dry land versus unmapped, uncharted, untamed land that is wet and swampy and usually discarded. So there is a difference within the landscape metaphor" (Williamson, "Speaking In" 27).

[3] A dead language lives on only in writing and in the Appendix (organ without function) of dictionaries.

4. The reorganization of the body:

"musing with mothertongue"

* Versions of this chapter were read at the "Imag(in)ing Women: Representations of Women in Culture Conference," University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, April 5-7, 1990, and to the seminar on "Textual Bodies: Writing as Material Substance and/or Figurative Organism" at the "Bodies: Image, Writing, Technology Conference," University of California, Irvine, April 26-28, 1990. I would like to thank the English Department and the Faculty of Graduate Studies for funding my travel to the latter conference.

[1] I am using the version of "musing with mothertongue" published in Touch to My Tongue. Page references are to that book. As the essay is quite short, and as my analysis proceeds through it in the order in which it is written, readers will not find it difficult to consult one of the two other published versions. The essay appeared independently in the first issue of the journal Tessera [in Room of One's Own 8.4 (1984): 53-56] and in Dybikowski and others, eds., In the Feminine: Women and Words/Les Femmes et les Mots, Conference Proceedings 1983, pp. 171-74.

[2] Here I am deliberately echoing American poet Charles Olson's statement that "Objectism is the getting rid of the lyrical interference of the individual as ego, of the 'subject' and his soul, that peculiar presumption by which western man has interposed himself between what he is as a creature of nature (with certain instructions to carry out) and those other creations of nature which we may, with no derogation, call objects" ("Projective Verse" 156). In her work Marlatt considers this problem from the position of a western woman.

[3] The words 'puncture' and 'punctuate' share a common etymology meaning to mark with a point; pricked mark, point; to prick, pierce. Marlatt's idiosyncratic prose-like long line, interior punctuation and her notation in general can be read as simultaneously "kicking syntax" ("musing with mothertongue" 49) and marking, pricking and piercing the logocentric interior.

[4] Some of the methods feminist writers implement for speaking of such absence in a language of presence are not to defer to phallogocentric authority, not to defer speaking or writing, and not to defer pleasure. To refuse to defer to the real and/or the transcendental beyond is to position oneself not in logocentric presence but in the interval between words, phonemes, gestures, arms, lips, pelvic bones, tongues, etc. It is to defer deferral. If, as Marlatt insists, we are simply not given in actuality the real out there, then there can be no absence pure and simple. This writing in the intervals between bodies and among body surfaces I have called 'writing under embrasure.'

[5] That is to say, syntax is not identical with but equivalent to, not the body but, the body structure.

I discuss Marlatt's contribution to this discussion with bpNichol and George Bowering near the end of the present chapter.

See also Marcel Mauss on what he calls 'body techniques.'

[6] I am using the term 'trope' here in a very general way--as figure of speech. As Gérard Genette demonstrates, a figure is simply one signifier offered as the signified of another signifier. In actuality, both signifiers are merely signifiers. Neither can be legitimately claimed as the literal of the other. Both are literal signifiers (Genette 47). Hence I am using this sense of the word 'trope' to underscore the literalness of the body in Marlatt's writing.

This sense of 'trope' as two signifiers in a relationship of otherness parallels the relation between two languages, bodies or words.

[7] See Marlatt's comments on metaphor in Bowering, "Given This Body" 43.

[8] C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature, based on the original by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, 3rd ed. (Indianapolis: Odyssey P, 1972) 525.

[9] This is not to suggest that there is a prior or original meaning to the word hidden in etymology that

authorizes such interpretation. What I am suggesting is that Marlatt uses such a root to think otherwise, to translate beyond metaphysics.

[10] We must remember that the word 'body' is just that, a word. 'Body' is no more referential to the human body than it is, for example, to the body of language.

[11] In her essay on "Translating MAUVE," Marlatt quotes part of a letter from Colin Browne. Browne had written to her asking whether she would like to participate in a translation project involving the work of Québecoise writer Nicole Brossard. He gave the series the name 'transformances,' ostensibly to distinguish what he wanted from more traditional and faithful interlingual translations. Marlatt quotes one of his definitions of 'transformance' as "'reading reading, writing writing, writing reading--that flicker pan-linear, lured beyond equivalence: a new skin'" ("Translating MAUVE" 28).

[12] This may also partially account for the current disagreements about her work and the censuring responses to it of critics who are searching for consistency and a purity of poststructuralist, reader-response or Marxist conscience. I am thinking of articles by, respectively, Lola Tostevin and Frank Davey and a chapter of Sarah Harasym's dissertation.

Marlatt read Maurice Merleau-Ponty in the late sixties, very early in her career, yet she does not use his term 'flesh,' as it is usually translated. She retains the word 'body.' Thus she avoids placing her work within a strictly phenomenological poetics, acknowledging that, like Merleau-Ponty himself, we are still struggling with Descartes and the mind-body problem.

There seems to be a largely unexamined question, at least in the field of literary studies, as to the debt to Merleau-Ponty of the French feminists. For example, his interest in the process of the child's acquisition of language might be read as a precursor to Kristeva's theories of the semiotic and symbolic dimensions of signification. That this debt remains unexamined may be due in part to a reluctance to name a male precursor, in addition to the contemporary male philosophers and psychoanalysts, to the French feminists. It is not my wish to perform this duty; I simply note here that a shared interest in Merleau-Ponty forms a point of intersection between Marlatt, and for example, Héléne Cixous and Julia Kristeva.

There are a couple of recent articles which deal with Merleau-Ponty and feminism--Iris Marion Young's "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment, Motility, and Spatiality" and Judith Butler's "Sexual Ideology and Phenomenological Description: A Feminist Critique of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception" in Allen and Young. Elizabeth Grosz's work also depends upon readings of Merleau-Ponty.

[13] In Marlatt's Rings (1971), for example, a long poem about her pregnancy and the birth of her son, the title and overall shape, form or design of that long poem metaphorizes psychic confusion as well as various literal rings (wedding ring, the ring of the cervix, the cyclical rhythms of women's bodies).

[14] Here I am using 'metaphorize' and 'translate' in a similar way. Both terms contain the sense of 'to transport' or 'carry across.' I am letting them float together for the moment in order to invoke Barbara Freeman's work on Cixous's metaphorization of the body and Gérard Genette's work on the metaphor as one signifier masquerading as the signified of the other.

[15] Just as the movement between languages for Fred Wah involves primarily intralingual translation as a substitution for interlingual translation between English and Chinese (a language which he does not know), the translation in Marlatt's poetry is also intralingual from English to English. Wah's translation poetics emerges from a desire to connect with his father; Marlatt's translations using etymologies take on a new importance in How Hug a Stone, the first book in which she begins to deal with her mother's life as an immigrant and with what Marlatt has inherited from her.

[16] See Marlatt's use of the metaphor of seepage in her account of "Translating MAUVE."

[17] As Jacques Derrida observes in "Roundtable on Translation": "When one speaks of hysteria, of oneiric or hysterical translation, one is speaking of translation in [Roman] Jakobson's third sense, the passage from one semiotic system to another: words-gestures, words-images, acoustic-visual, and so forth" (The Ear of the Other 108).

[18] Hysterical translation does not re-present the body in the sense of presenting it over again, a second time. As David-Ménard argues, the hysterical body itself thinks (12). Her book is very helpful on the ways in which a pervasive dualism conditions Freud's theorization of hysteria and on reconceptualizing hysterical practice.

[19] As Marlatt suggests in "Writing our Way Through the Labyrinth," writing, unlike reading, seems to her to be

phallic, singular, proprietory, and self- rather than other-directed. As she says, "writing can scarcely be for women the act of the phallic signifier" (49). Women, she suggests are "lost" inside of the labyrinth of language. We must "(w)rite [the word itself is an intralingual translation] our way . . . in intercommunicating passages" (49).

[20] This is Bowering's interpretation of Charles Olson's thoughts on composing on the typewriter.

[21] Marlatt's translation poetics have always been taken up with translating between topos and trope. In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel published in 1986, Marlatt updates her preoccupation with topos. She says: "And my region, i mean the region i'm writing out of, is not so much place or landscape these days as life as a woman" (13). Topos has become trope.

V. The Promise of Translation

[1] I am paraphrasing my notes from a seminar given by Jacques Derrida at the International Summer School for Semiotic and Structural Studies, University of Toronto, June 25, 1984. I have checked them against Stephen Scobie's use of his notes from the same seminar in his article "Surviving the Paraph-raise."

[2] See Kroetsch's catalogue of such absences in section 4 of Seed Catalogue.

[3] Kroetsch quotes the section ("Flies") in which one lover records noticing a pair of flies on the ceiling making love, thus further decentering his own metaphor of lovemaking.

[4] Frank Davey discusses several methods by which writers of the contemporary Canadian long poem have replaced narrative: place; language itself; the recurrent image; linguistic and narrative adventure, game and play; collage; symphonic form; and geography. Davey is concerned to preserve the element of narrative in the long poem. He sees these other methods as supplanting sequential narrative, not narrative as such. He suggests that "In recent years narrative makes a comeback as the narrative of composition" ("The Language of the Contemporary Canadian Long Poem" 184-85).

[5] Derrida comments on the word 'natural' in Descartes's phrase 'natural reason':

> But the meaning of the word 'natural' in the expression 'natural language' is clearly opposed to its meaning in 'natural reason'. It is quite clear, but this first paradox must be emphasized: a natural language is native or national, but also particular and historical; it is the least commonly shared thing in the world. The natural reason that Descartes talks about is presumably universal, ahistorical, pre- or metalinguistic. We are dealing here with two determinations of naturality ("Languages and Institutions of Philosophy" 92).

[6] In a book on The Concept of Method Justus Buchler compares the Coleridgean and Cartesian concepts of method. His comparison can be related to Marlatt's phenomenological method and/or inspiration. Buchler writes:

> The "leading idea" of Coleridge supplies impetus and stimulus, and is most fully exemplified where "inspiration" is present. But the Cartesian rule is designed precisely to obviate dependency on inspiration, or more generally, dependency on contingent stimuli and indeterminate devices. The way ahead is to be prescribed by formulae, reason being in a sense the capacity to provide such formulae. The rule . . . ensures economy; for diffuseness, regardless of the success it may permit, generates distraction and confusion, and courts irrelevancy, which is the basis of imperfection (71).

Marlatt's poetics, based on inspiration as literal breathing and on entering into the flux of time and chance, is clearly and deliberately antithetical to the sense of method we have inherited from writers such as Descartes.

[7] One can hear an echo from Marlatt's two mouths to Irigaray's two lips. Or is it an echo, since echoes bounce from ear to ear. Maybe a kiss. Perhaps when two lips speak together, it is not only what is heard, as many critics worry, but the fact of their speaking, their movement, their banishment of silence (or not) and what is created between them that is important.

[8] Françoise Meltzer describes the economy of psychoanalysis as hydraulic:

> Psychoanalysis, in other words, has not only an

> economy which is hydraulic (mirroring the nineteenth-century physics from which it springs), but has as well an economy of seepage: each apparent object, whether in dream, literature, or psychic narrative, splashes over onto at least one "something else." Not only is there always a remainder, but the remainder generally proliferates, multiplies, from more than one quotient, such that the original "thing" in question becomes merely the agent for production. Its status as thing-in-the-world is easily lost (215-16).

Meltzer notes that psychoanalysis has also seeped into many other disciplines. For example, she quotes Shoshana Felman, who posits a dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis as between two different bodies of language and between two different modes of knowledge (217). As Patrick Mahony has argued, Freud's work has contributed substantially to translation theory as well.

Barbara Godard picks up on the physics metaphor in her remarks about feminist writing/translation: "This theory of translation as production, not reproduction, focusing on the feminist discourse as it works through the problematic notions of identity and reference, is at odds with the long-dominant theory of translation as equivalence and transparency which describes the translator as an invisible hand mechanically turning the words of one language into another" (Homel and Simon 50). I share Godard's view that in feminist writing the whole body of the translator is becoming visible and substantially changing our concept of translation.

Carol Maier has written a very interesting article about how she dealt with the feminist issues which came to the fore during her translations of texts by Cuban-born, male poet Octavio Armand. Maier, realizing that translation "seemed to offer a way of learning to let go in a language, of knowing intimately the body of a particular text and creating a new body through the pleasure of shared experience" (6), decided, for example, to summon the absent mother in his work and give voice to her. She concludes that the resulting translation "is his tongue, but I know that it is also mine" (7).

[9] Translation _might_ be construed a 'method' in the sense of its Greek root _methodos_, which means simply a going after, pursuit (as of knowledge): _met(a),_ _after_ _+_ _hodos_, journey.

Sherry Simon makes a statement the converse to mine that translation is not a method. She writes: "Feminism in these two examples [Christa Wolf's _Cassandra_ and Marie Cardinal's _Medea_] is nothing like a _method_ of translation" (Homel and Simon 52).

[10] Owners Manual is the title of one of Wah's books. In an interview with me in 1986 he said:

> And Owners Manual is a book that deals with the body. The owner is yourself. . . . I'm kind of humorously interested in the fact that we've got these wonderful owner's manuals for our cars but not for our bodies. . . . There are poetry owner's manuals. Certainly The Odyssey is a great owner's manual. The Epic of Gilgamesh and The Divine Comedy are great owner's manuals. But to be just intentional about it . . . (17).

Wah's Owners Manual, published after Pictograms from the Interior of B.C., is a book of poems in which the associated pictographs are not included. Wah removed them because he "didn't want the trans aspect to be there" (17). When we read this owner's manual then, this book about the body, we cannot help but translate, and our own bodies become pictograms.

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